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*Ben Jonson: Poet*

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IN ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE



# *Ben Jonson: Poet*

GEORGE BURKE JOHNSTON

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*Three teachers marked me deeper than the rest:  
Of many good, triumvirate of best.  
Behind the three, snow-bearded Kittredge stands,  
Twin bolts—wisdom and fury—in his hands.  
Unknown to him, by him I fruitful am,  
And thousands upon thousands is my name.*



## Preface

THIS BOOK had its beginning in a seminar under Harry Morgan Ayres, whose wise counsel and encouragement also guided it to completion. The first draft of the material now included in "The Lame Lord of Fire" and "Humble Gleanings in Divinitie" was written in a seminar under Frederick S. Boas, then visiting lecturer at Columbia University. Most of the actual composition was done under the direction of Oscar James Campbell, who patiently bore the burden of numerous readings and rereadings as the material was hammered into shape. To all three I express my grateful appreciation.

Jefferson Butler Fletcher, Henry W. Wells, Hoxie N. Fairchild, and William Y. Tindall read the manuscript and offered helpful criticism. Joseph Quincy Adams and James G. McManaway of the Folger Shakespeare Library called my attention to the poem ascribed to Jonson in Ashmore's collection of Horatian odes and gave me a photostat of it. Miss Dorothy Mason, also of the Folger Library, helped me check quotations and bibliographical material. Percy Simpson wrote a very kind letter informing me that he was including the Ashmore poem in Volume Eight of the Oxford *Ben Jonson* among the spurious pieces and gave his reasons for doubting its authenticity. Many teachers and friends not named here have had an important part in shaping this book. I wish it were possible to thank them all individually.

As to books, the cornerstone is the Jonson Folio, 1640, to which I have paid my respects elsewhere. Whenever possible, I have taken the Jonsonian quotations from the two 1640 volumes, though some readings in the 1616 Folio (corresponding to the first volume of the 1640 edition) are no doubt preferable.

After the Folio, the monumental Oxford *Ben Jonson*, edited by C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson, and the superb edition of *The Poems of Ben Jonson*, edited by B. H. Newdigate, were of most value.

Numerous other debts are covered in the footnotes and the bibliography.

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## CHAPTER I

### *Jonsonus Virbius*

WHEN Ben Jonson died, in 1637, the Sons of Ben compiled a memorial volume called *Jonsonus Virbius*. The praises in this volume are startling, even to one firmly sealed of the Tribe of Ben: "Thou great refiner of our poesy, who turn'st to gold that which before was lead"; "Great Jonson, king of English poetry . . . English poetry is dead with thee"; "We ever must despair, that any age can raise thee up an heir"; "Poet of princes, Prince of poets"; "Jonson's skeleton is Laureat." Even Inigo Jones, beyond doubt Ben's worst enemy, damned him with very strong praise indeed: "The best of poets, but the worst of men." In the light of this praise of his poetic merit, the hyperbole of the authors of the *Virbius* can hardly be dismissed as mere servility to the commemorative tradition. The emphasis on Jonson as poet is entirely in keeping with his own self-estimation. Without appending the title to his signature, as Michelangelo did "sculptor" or as Skelton did "laureate," he made it clear that even the author of his plays is a poet and that they are poems.

In Jonson's own lifetime, however, the seeds were sown for the later conception of him as scholar, man of letters—with dramatic ability, of course—rather than as inspired genius or true poet. Even Milton, praising his favorite dramatists, contrasts by implication the native woodnotes wild and the learned sock. The "Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war" pictured by Fuller crystallized the idea of the contrast between Jonson and Shakespeare which has existed almost as a dogma to the present day. Dryden, who seems to me to owe as much to Jonson as did any of the Sons of Ben and to be a "halved Jonson" as surely as Terence was a "halved Menander," *admired* Jonson, but *loved* Shakespeare. However, Dryden was not guilty of the fallacy of denying his great satirical predecessor the name of "poet." His study of the great Elizabethans is called *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, not "An Essay of Poetic Drama." Pope and Samuel Johnson, also godsons of Ben, devoted their critical powers and paid their homage to Shakespeare.

In the nineteenth century Ben fell into the hands of an over-violent

partisan, William Gifford. It is still doubtful whether Jonsonians should bless or curse him, though Swinburne seems to have had little doubt that he should be cursed. Possibly Gifford's extravagant and somewhat indiscriminate praise damaged his idol's reputation; undoubtedly his still more indiscriminate attacks on all dead or living rivals and enemies of Ben were responsible for stirring up whole hornets' nests of controversy. Nevertheless, Gifford's edition of Jonson's works was the standard for a full century, Cunningham's edition being little more than a reprint of Gifford's with additional inaccuracies. Swinburne's opinion of his doughty forerunners in Jonsonian scholarship is expressed in no uncertain terms in his *Study of Ben Jonson*. His utterances include: "capricious impertinence," "unspeakable editors," "the moles and bats who have hitherto taken charge of this great writer's text," and "the beetle-headed boobies to whose carelessness the charge of Jonson's posthumous writings was committed by the malignity of accident."<sup>1</sup>

Swinburne's little book is as readable and as prejudiced as these excerpts indicate; and it has had a definite effect on succeeding scholars. It is, perhaps, Swinburne's weight as a literary figure which helped reverse the Victorian conception of Jonson; for Swinburne complained that injustice had been done to Ben Jonson "as one of the greatest of dramatists and humorists" and that "more than justice" had been done to him as a lyric poet. His strictures on Jonson's inability to sing are echoed in the Oxford *Ben Jonson*, immeasurably more monumental and scholarly than anything attempted by Swinburne in the field of criticism. One of the Oxford editors follows the Victorian poet in casting doubt on the authenticity of certain poems largely, though not entirely, on the grounds of internal evidence of a poetic inspiration superior to Jonson's customary utterances. These disputed poems will be considered in the text of this study.

Swinburne intensified the contrast between Shakespeare, supreme among the "gods of English verse," and Jonson, equally supreme among its "giants": "Were it possible for one not born a god to become divine by dint of ambition and devotion, this glory would have crowned the Titanic labours of Ben Jonson."<sup>2</sup> Although this figura-

<sup>1</sup> Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, pp. 120, 136, 169, 177.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

tive mode of criticism, with its attendant halo of supernaturalism, is out of fashion now, it has had a considerable effect on the "giant's" reputation. It is easy to say that one poet has divine genius, another only intelligence and learning; and once such a conception has been established, it is very hard to eradicate. Even the Oxford editors, certainly C. H. Herford, seem always conscious of godlike Shakespeare towering over "rugged Ben," with his occasional "fugitive sweetness."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps no other poet in English literature has been so constantly cited as an antithesis to Shakespeare; it is needless to emphasize the injustice to a poet of contrasting him with the accepted master of the literature of his country, a master included among the three or four greatest poets of the world.

There are signs, however, that modern critics are beginning to study Jonson more for himself and less as a straw man to be knocked down in order to exhibit Shakespeare once again as the champion among them all. In editing the first complete edition of Jonson's poems, Bernard H. Newdigate defends them against the neglect which all but a very few have suffered.<sup>4</sup> And at least two other contemporary critics have found superior merit in Jonson as a poet. L. C. Knights calls him "a very great poet,"<sup>5</sup> though he confines his study to the dramatic poetry. Whatever one may think of Knights's theory of the importance of Elizabethan and Jacobean economy to Jonson's literary creations, particularly the plays, his analysis of the effectiveness of the poet's dramatic verse is a real service to Jonson and his admirers. On the other hand, R. S. Walker, in *Criterion*, gives first place to Jonson's lyrics rather than to his dramas; he devotes his article, however, only to the "successful" lyrics, which he selects from the large body of the poetry.<sup>6</sup> The slow wheel of critical taste has almost come full circle.

In contrast to the Sons of Ben, Walker warns against consideration of Jonson's "personality" in a critical study of his masterpieces.<sup>7</sup> Beyond doubt excessive consciousness of Ben Jonson the man—who

<sup>3</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 413.

<sup>4</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, pp. v, vi.

<sup>5</sup> Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson*, p. 179.

<sup>6</sup> Walker, "Ben Jonson's Lyric Poetry," *Criterion*, XIII (1933-34), 430-48. Walker explains the hostility of the nineteenth-century critics as resentment against a classicist "antagonistic to their spontaneous overflow theory," p. 432.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 432.

is, indeed, a comic masterpiece created by the author himself as well as by his friends and enemies—has stood in the way of appreciation of the poet. The “mountain belly” and the “rocky face,” the ponderous creature who scarcely visited a friend without breaking a chair, are the stuff of comedy no less than the pacing poet in a prodigious sweat behind the scenes in *The Staple of News*, the fat cook of the prologue to *The New Inn*, and the “great Clarke, as any” is of his bulke” in *The Magnetick Lady*, all three being frank, comical self-caricatures. Although there is danger that we may see “Cupid in a Hercules his shape” behind all the plays and poems, it is undesirable, nay impossible, to disregard this person. I shall try, however, to avoid mixing the exterior personality with the poet except when the poet is using that personality as material for poetry, and even then to avoid confusing the typical satirist (the “satyre”) with Ben Jonson the man.

Ben called his dramatic works poems, but in this study “poem” is used in its modern sense (even *Hamlet* and *Lear* are seldom called poems now, though their author is always “the poet”). Without avoiding mention of masques and plays, this study is to deal primarily with the nondramatic poems. It is not concerned so much with the “goodness” or “badness” of the works, but rather with an attempt to find out what kind of poet Jonson is, what his conception of poetry was, what materials he used (that is, what he considered poetic), and if possible why he was a poet. The clew to most of the answers can be found in the poems themselves; a study of them, however, must be supplemented by an examination of the poet’s critical works—his prefaces, prologues, and the essays in the *Discoveries*.

In considering this body of critical doctrine there is again a danger. Charles Read Baskervill, one of the greatest of Jonsonians, was most unlike himself when he stated that Sidney, more inspired than Jonson, used the principles of *The Defense of Poesy* “merely for general guidance,” while Jonson accepted them “as actual working rules.”<sup>8</sup> Although Ben left an enormous body of critical material, he by no means sat down with the rules before him every time he began to write. Much of his work, possibly including many of his “failures,” departs from his own critical doctrines in one way or another. For

<sup>8</sup> Baskervill, *English Elements in Jonson’s Early Comedy*, p. 25.

instance, the two tragedies, which one would expect to be the most classical structures in his works, violate the "unities." Yet there is no doubt that he knew the rules and could use them very effectively. *Every Man in His Humour*, which was composed several years earlier than either of the tragedies, is excellent as classical construction; and *The Alchemist*, composed between *Sejanus* and *Catiline*, is a veritable triumph of the unities. Ben's defense, printed in the quarto version of *Sejanus*, but omitted from the folio, is worthy of consideration:

First, if it be objected, that what I publish is no true Poëme; in the strict Lawes of Time. I confesse it: as also in the want of a proper Chorus, whose Habite, and Moodes are such, and so difficult, as not any, whome I haue seene since the Auntients, (no not they who haue most presently affected Lawes) haue yet come in the way off. Nor is it needful, or almost possible, in these our Times, and to such Auditors, as commonly things are presented, to obserue the ould state, and splendour of Drammatick Poëmes, with preseruatiō of any popular delight.<sup>9</sup>

Here, then, is a frank statement that the author is forced to compromise with his more rigid critical doctrines for the "preservation" of "popular delight." In other words, the tastes of his own day are to have their share in shaping the works of the poet. Nevertheless, the critical doctrines are of great importance and serve as a valuable starting point for a study of his poetry.

The requirements for a poet laid down in the *Discoveries* (largely translations, but hardly less valuable for that reason as evidence of Jonson's opinion) are: natural wit (now called genius), exercise or practice, *imitation*, study, and *art*. Two of those terms need explanation. "Art" is more nearly related to "artifice" in its best sense than to our somewhat expansive and vague use of the word. When Ben praises Shakespeare's art in the poem "To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare," he makes it quite clear that he means "crafty revision." "Imitation" is not here used as Aristotle and Sidney used it, for "imitation of life"; nor is it branded with the stigma of mere copying, as we are likely to consider it. It is nearer to our word "assimilation." Ben illustrates precisely what he means by "imitation":

<sup>9</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, IV, 350.

Not, as a Creature, that swallowes, what it takes in, crude, raw, or indigested; but, that feedes with an Appetite, and hath a Stomacke to concoct, devide, and turne all into nourishment . . . to draw forth out of the best, and choicest flowers, with the Bee, and turne all into Honey, worke it into one relish, and savour.

To this "imitation" of authors, as we shall see later, Jonson added assimilation of actual experience; hence, a very acceptable modern philosophy of poetry.

In tracking down Jonson's imitations we have as helpful a guide as in tracking down his critical theories. He furnished several of his works with careful footnotes and allowed glimpses into his methods in prefaces, prologues, and epilogues. The prefatory dedication in the Quarto text of *The Masque of Queens* (1609) is particularly instructive:

*Poetry*, my Lord, is not borne with euery man; Nor euery day: And in her generall right, it is now my minute to thanke your *Highnesse*, who not only do honour her with your eare, but are curious to examine her with your eye, and inquire into her beauties, and strengths. Where though it hath proued a worke of some difficulty to me to retriue the particular *authorities* (according to your gracious command, and a desire borne out of iudgment) to those things, which I writt out of fullnesse, and memory of my former readings: Yet, now I haue ouercome it, the reward, that meetes me is double to one act . . .<sup>10</sup>

I have no doubt that he enjoyed exploring his own consciousness. But a mere listing of authorities, whether by Jonson or any other person, cannot explain the shaping imagination which made use of those authorities, especially when they have been gathered from widely different sources.

Indeed, the two most interesting and delightful footnotes are not bookish:

Bodin . . . hath (beside the known story of Kind Duffe out of Hector Boetius) much of the witches later practice in that kind, and reports a relation of a French Ambassadors, out of England, of certain pictures of waxe found in a dunghill, near Islington, of our late Queenes, which rumor, I my selfe (being then very yong) can yet remember to have been current.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, VII, 281.



The other is still more personal:

Of the green cock, we have no other ground (to confesse ingeniously) than a vulgar fable of a witch, that with a cock of that colour, and a bottome of blue thred, would transport her selfe through the ayre; and so escaped (at the time of her being brought to execution) from the hand of justice. It was a tale when I went to schoole . . .

This "tale when I went to schoole" gives a more complete realization of Jonson's three-dimensional existence than all the biographical sketches or "characters" made of him from the *Conversations* to the present. It also gives warning that popular as well as literary themes found their way into the poet's work.

Truth has had few more ardent servants among the bards than Jonson; he strives, almost without exception, to mingle profit with delight; yet with Sidney he insists that poetry must be fiction to be poetry:

A Poet is that which by the Greeks is call'd . . . a Maker, or a fairer: His Art, an Art of imitation, or faining; expressing the life of man in fit measure, numbers, and harmony, according to Aristotle . . . Hence, hee is call'd a Poet, not hee which writeth in measure only; but that fayneth and formeth a fable, and writes things like the Truth . . .

In these lines "imitation" has its older meaning—imitation of life, not of other authors.

As to what Ben considered "fit measure, numbers, and harmony," his practice is too varied and complicated to admit a solution in the space of an introduction. On one matter, though, his practice in his nondramatic poems is consistent and definite: every poem in the *Folio* is rhymed; every poem in Newdigate's collection is rhymed except one, "The Power of Gold," which is in blank verse and is probably a dramatic fragment rather than a poem<sup>11</sup>—and this in spite of "A Fit of Rime against Rime," which has been taken seriously in some quarters as an actual expression of distaste for rhyme in any form.

There is a growing tendency to revise the estimate of Jonson's debt to the classics and to place him in the line of the English tradition. No one, of course, would deny the powerful impact which the

<sup>11</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, pp. 272, 368.

classics made on his mind and his work; but since Charles R. Baskervill's early work, *English Elements in Jonson's Early Comedy* (1911), realization has grown that tracking him in the snow of the great classical writers (Dryden's phrase) is not sufficient for an understanding of his poetry. It is in the light of the native tradition that I wish primarily to consider him.

Falkland made such a sweeping statement of Jonson's reading habits that even with allowance for hyperbole it takes a hardy soul to track Jonson in any snow:

His learning such, no author old or new,  
Escap'd his reading that deserved his view,  
And such his judgment, so exact his test,  
Of what was best in books, as what books best,  
That had he join'd those notes his labours took,  
From each most prais'd and praise-deserving book,  
And could the world of that choice treasure boast,  
It need not care though all the rest were lost.<sup>12</sup>

Herford called Jonson "ultra Elizabethan."<sup>13</sup> For all their classical borrowings the Elizabethans belong in the main stream of English literature from the time of Chaucer if not, indeed, from the time of *Beowulf*. Jonson's position in the later windings of that stream, his survival in Milton, the Cavaliers, Dryden, and Pope, is well known; but his acquaintance with his English predecessors and his respect for them are not so evident, though not less real. From direct quotations and references we know that he was acquainted with Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, Skelton, the "Courtly Makers," Sidney, and Spenser. Let us see whether Jonson has his place in the long succession.

The first thing of note is that Chaucer, however much he loved his poetry or however much he used it to get ahead in the world, was a man of affairs, definitely not a "professional" poet in our sense of the word. Although Chaucer's output may seem enormous in comparison with that of some of our thin-volumed professionals today, it certainly casts no overwhelming shadow on the mass of literature produced by his contemporary Gower or his follower Lydgate. Lydgate, to be sure, was a churchman and had more time to write

<sup>12</sup> Falkland, "An Eclogue on the Death of Ben Jonson," in *The Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. by Barry Cornwall.

<sup>13</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 121.

than a secular man of affairs. In some ways he is nearer the twentieth-century conception of poets than is Chaucer: his religious duties probably interfered no more with his writing than the occasional lectures of our college-paid poets interfere with theirs; yet they furnished a more stable means of support than the muse alone can generally be expected to furnish.

John Skelton, perhaps more than any of the earlier English poets, is like Jonson, although the latter must have thought of him as an entirely different figure from the poet we now know. Both were learned Latinists, both sharp-tongued satirists, and each had such a commanding personality that they became legendary figures in their own lifetimes. Since their legends were part of the jestbook tradition, they were not very lofty or inspiring, but none the less vigorous. Finally, the personalities and the legends have to a certain extent obscured the actual literary achievements. Like Lydgate, Skelton was a churchman; but he did not retire to a cloister to write. Except when attending to his duties as rector of Diss, he held a position in the court of Henry VIII not altogether unlike that which Jonson held at the court of James I. However, the similarity here cannot be pressed too far, since Skelton was only incidentally an entertainer and writer of occasional verse; his primary duties in court, according to William Nelson, were probably diplomatic and political.<sup>14</sup> In the matter of language, Churchyard's praise of Skelton is equally applicable to Jonson; indeed, some of the latter's disciples gave him much the same praise. "Nor skorne not mother tunge, O babes of English breed!" says Churchyard.<sup>15</sup> And surely the author of the *English Grammar*, who did not try to embalm his great works in Latin, did not scorn it. Skelton, according to Churchyard, held the mirror up to nature to show vice and virtue—to show what life was good, what was bad. These are the avowed purposes of the Elizabethan satirists.

To Wyatt and Surrey poetry was a mere social grace, if not simply an amusement as it must have been to most of the Courtly Makers. Sidney could hardly be called a professional poet by any stretching of the term, though Kenneth Myrick defends his serious devotion to

<sup>14</sup> Nelson, *John Skelton, Laureate*, pp. 48, 121-24.

<sup>15</sup> Skelton, *The Poetical Works*, ed. by Dyce, I, lxxvii.

letters. Even Spenser used his poetry to further his political career, and in his own estimation may well have been as much man of affairs as poet.

All these men, from Chaucer to Sidney and Spenser, make up what may be called the "literary tradition" of English poetry in contrast to the anonymous popular tradition which paralleled their works in point of time. Whatever aesthetic or literary kinship there may be between these authors and Jonson—and the *Discoveries* and *English Grammar* alone are sufficient evidence that he felt kinship with them—there is one great difference between their positions as poets. The development of the popular theater in England during the sixteenth century furnished an opportunity for poets to make a living without dependence upon pensions, patrons, or nonliterary positions. No doubt the trade of the literary hack is an ancient one, and no doubt minstrels in singing for their suppers were living on their verse in a competitive world; but the Tudor theater opened up a professional field that attracted even the university men. Wit and learning became negotiable commodities. There is surely no question but that Thomas Kyd and Robert Greene were professional writers. Marlowe too, though he had other means of livelihood—means which probably contributed to the abrupt end of his career—must have been a true professional. Shakespeare, definitely one of the writers' guild, also had another source of income as shareholder in a theatrical company.

To us, looking back at the Elizabethan period, Jonson seems to belong to this group of professionals, save that his eye was apparently not quite so closely fixed on the box office; but there are some important distinctions which set him a little apart. We must remember that in the Elizabethan period the average, even the exceptional, dramatist was regarded by the general public about as highly as a literary figure as script writers in the movies are ranked today. The unusually long, but customarily well-written, preface to *Volpone* gives some idea of this situation. Of course, most lovers of Shakespeare have never forgiven the author of this preface for its gloomy view of the state of contemporary poetry.

If my Muses be true to mee, I shall raise the despis'd head of Poetrie againe, and stripping her out of those rotten and base rags, wherewith

the Times have adulterated her forme, restore her to her primitive habit, feature, and majestic, and render her worthy to be imbraced, and kist, of all the great and master-spirits of our world.

Imagine the thunders! But the critics who roared loudest, including Swinburne, had to all practical purposes a Shakespeare Folio at their elbows while they roared. It seems not to have occurred to them that in 1607-8 Ben had probably *read* little of Shakespeare and could hardly have had the perspective he showed fifteen years later, when he wrote "To the Memory of My Beloved, Master William Shakespeare." It must also have escaped their observation that Jonson's Folio, which began a fashion, was brought out amid hoots and cat-calls in 1616. A playmaker had the audacity to print *plays* under the title "Workes," with every appearance of believing that he had written literature.<sup>16</sup> Seven years later this same playmaker introduced with a superb piece of critical commendatory verse the collected works of a fellow dramatist and poet. Without doubt professional poetry was completely stripped from her "rotten and base rags," and it is unjust to deny Ben Jonson his share in the stripping. For Jonson had combined the ideals and practices of the older school and a devotion to the high mission of poetry with the professionalism and popular tone of the newer school.

Louis B. Wright explains the burst of poetic energy in the latter part of the sixteenth century as partly the outgrowth of the excellent grammar schools of the period.<sup>17</sup> Of course education alone cannot make a poet, but "a good poet's made as well as born." Certainly education played a large part in the literary careers of the shoemaker's son from Canterbury, the small-town boy from Stratford, and the bricklayer's apprentice from London. Marlowe was the only one of the three who received a university education; but Shakespeare was trained in an excellent grammar school at Stratford, and Jonson studied under one of the finest scholars of the day at Westminster.

Neither Marlowe nor Shakespeare has told us about the man who first fired him with love of learning. Jonson left two fine tributes to

<sup>16</sup> Wright, *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, p. 96: "Henry Fitzgeffrey, in his *Satyres: and Epigrams* (1617) . . . 'Bookes, made of Ballades: Workes: of Playes . . .'" See also Clark, *Thomas Heywood*, p. 18 (*Fair Maid of the West*, Part I, Preface, and *English Traveller*, Preface).

<sup>17</sup> Wright, *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, p. 48.

his master William Camden, which have been taken as charming expressions of gratitude to a man who introduced Latin to a potentially great Latinist. I am convinced that Camden played a more important part in Ben's literary career than mere teacher or mere friend. When Ben says

Camden, most reverend head, to whom I owe  
All that I am in arts, all that I know

may we not expect to find the great scholar at the bottom of Jonson's determination to become a poet? Certainly the author of the "Preface to the Reader" in the *Annals of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* expressed a love of truth comparable to that of his pupil and disciple; Camden also paid Tacitus tribute both in the Preface and in the form and method of the work itself. Is it not likely that the second pen, the "happier genius" who collaborated in the first version of *Sejanus*, based chiefly on the *Annals* of Tacitus, is the author who modeled his own ambitious history on those *Annals*? Neither Shakespeare nor Chapman fill the requirements for the coauthor of *Sejanus* as well as Camden does.<sup>18</sup> Certainly the reader of Camden finds less to marvel at in the accomplishments of his pupil.

Aside from the lyrics in plays and masques, the poems of Jonson published in the Folio are included in three groups: "Epigrams" and "The Forest" in the 1616 Folio, "Under-woods" or "Under-wood" in the 1640 Folio. In addition to these three groups various commendatory verses printed in contemporary volumes and manuscript poems make up a group called by the Oxford editors "Ungathered Verse." Newdigate appropriately entitled these poems "Drift-wood": "So the present editor ventures to entitle these additional poems ('out of the analogie they hold to' the earlier collections, 'and no otherwise,') . . ." <sup>19</sup> He also included three other groups of poems: "Farrago," a hodge-podge of material traditionally assigned to Jonson or dealing with him intimately, "Frondes Latinae" (for a Latinist the leaves are very scanty), and an anthology of lyrics from plays and masques.

Jonson, like Chaucer and Skelton, left records of works which

<sup>18</sup> For discussion of the "second pen" see Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 3-6.

<sup>19</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, p. 241.

are no longer in existence. The most interesting of these are listed in the "Execration upon Vulcan." The fire, probably in 1623, destroyed "parcels of a play" as well as a wide variety of other material:

All the old Venusine, in Poëtrie,  
And lighted by the Stagerite, could spie,  
Was there mad English: with the Grammar too,  
To teach some that, their Nurses could [not] doe,  
The puritie of Language; and among  
The rest, my journey into Scotland song,  
With all th'adventures; Three bookes not afraid  
To speake the fate of the Sicilian Maid  
To our owne Ladyes; and in storie there  
Of our fift Henry, eight of his nine yeare;  
Wherein was oyle, beside the succour spent,  
Which noble Carew, Cotton, Selden lent:  
And twice-twelve-yeares stor'd up humanitie,  
With humble Gleanings in Divinitie;  
After the Fathers, and those wiser Guides  
Whom Faction had not drawne to studie sides.

Not all these losses were complete and permanent, though a very few of them which are might have added considerably to their author's reputation. The history of Henry V, for instance, was evidently in the form of annals—eight of the nine years being completed. This could hardly have been other than an attempt to follow in Camden's footsteps. Swinburne felt that fate had done Jonson a double injury in the loss of the Aristotelian commentary and the survival of the text of Horace's *Art of Poetry*.<sup>20</sup>

Basing their assumption on the "Sicilian Maid," all the editors of Jonson have credited him with three books on "The Rape of Proserpina." W. D. Briggs consigned this shadowy mythological narrative to oblivion by pointing out the manuscript version of the poem which reads:

. . . three books not amisse  
Reveald if some can judge, of Argenis  
For our own Ladyes.

Additional evidence supports the reading of the manuscript. The translation of *Argenis* was registered, but never appeared in print;

<sup>20</sup> Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 112.

Argenis was daughter of the King of Sicily.<sup>21</sup> Herford used Jonson's nonexistent *Argenis* to help date the "Execration" and quoted the manuscript, but inexplicably retained the statement about the three books on Proserpina.<sup>22</sup>

The lost poem I should most like to read is "My Journey into Scotland Sung with All th'Adventures." Besides being a rare piece of pure autobiography—how rare I hope to emphasize in this study—it would help to settle many of the issues and problems raised by the unreliable *Conversations* of Drummond of Hawthornden. But perhaps even that poem would be a poor price for the "Execration" itself, which has met with much unqualified praise from scholars, but very little attention from readers in the mass. Since the "Execration" was the starting point in my study of Jonson's poetry, I am making it the point of departure in my critical analysis.

For a good many years critics of Jonson's poems took them up as they were divided in the original collections, devoting sections of criticism to each group. Any reader of "Epigrams" or "Under-wood" will see immediately the difficulty and weakness of this method, since there is neither formal nor material unity in either collection. The Oxford editors, though they plan to print the poems as they appeared in the original collections, divide them for critical study into types: odes, lyrics, satires, elegies, and so forth.<sup>23</sup>

I have chosen a somewhat different method, dividing the poems into broad groups according to subject matter which was important during the literary career of Jonson. "The Lame Lord of Fire" takes up the poems dealing with mythology. "Humble Gleanings in Divinitie" is a study of the religious poetry. "Troth, Put Out Woman Too" discusses the contrasting treatment of woman, largely inherited from the Middle Ages, and compares Jonson's satire directed at men with that directed at women. "The Learned Librarie of Don Quixote" deals with the equally contrasted views of both chivalry and courtly love as they appear in the poems. "Master Surveyor" is a varied study of the conflicting influences of the long and important association of Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones, the King's Surveyor, as creators of

<sup>21</sup> Briggs, "Studies in Ben Jonson," *Anglia*, XXXVII (1913), 488-89.

<sup>22</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, I, 73-75; 87-88; II, 339, 472.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 337-413.



masques; and in addition it considers the masque and its accompanying fine arts as they appear in the poems and as they influence the form and content of poems not dealing directly with them. "Master Cook" is an attempt to sum up and bring together the problems and solutions of the work as a whole.

This method should throw light upon certain aspects of Jonson's poetry which in former studies have been somewhat obscure.

## CHAPTER II

# *The Lame Lord of Fire*

GREEK and Roman mythology had a profound effect on the literature and art of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but in recent years scholars have shown more and more that the Middle Ages and the Renaissance had an equally profound effect on Greek and Roman mythology. Douglas Bush gives the largest, most comprehensive view of the latter effect. The two most important changes were undoubtedly the allegorization of the classics and the confusion of nonclassical matter (such as the Troy stories stemming from Dictys and Dares) with the classical works. Bush also traces the changes of the classic myth during the Renaissance as follows:

The cycle of taste is roughly parallel to that represented by the ancient writers already named (Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Theocritus, Virgil, Ovid, Lucian): it begins with religious seriousness and ends with irreverent burlesque.<sup>1</sup>

To say that Ben Jonson, whom Bush calls only a "relative neoclassicist,"<sup>2</sup> wrote of myths proper with *religious* seriousness would be very near absurdity; but he did treat them with seriousness on some occasions. However, he looked forward to later writers of his century and was most himself and least a mere borrower from the classics in his burlesque poetry.

Vulcan is grotesque in Homer; he is, if possible, more grotesque in Jonson, with little of the compensating Homeric divinity. He will serve as a burlesque Virgil in the tripartite journey through mythology with Ben—serious, allegorical, and burlesque.

The poem in which the lame god plays the most important part is "An Execration upon Vulcan." This poem appeared in print after Jonson's death, but there is considerable reason for dating it in the latter part of the year 1623,<sup>3</sup> a little past the middle of the author's literary career. It is one of the longer nondramatic poems (more than two hundred lines), and its interest to the student of Jonson is comparable to its length. In the first place, it presents a picture of the

<sup>1</sup> Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, I, 73-74.

poet in a jovial frame of mind under decidedly adverse circumstances; as a pleasant personal picture, it has received Herford's and Gregory Smith's praise.<sup>4</sup> It is more valuable, though, in that it lists the works destroyed in Vulcan's raid, satirizes contemporary events and persons, and has a close connection with two masques and a play which were written at about the same time' (*News from the New World*, 1621, *Neptune's Triumph*, 1624, and *The Staple of News*, 1625-26).<sup>5</sup>

The early relations between the smoky god and the poet were quite amicable with the exception of Ovid's banquet in *Poetaster*, which in plot, at least, is little more than the conclusion of the first book of Homer adapted to satiric comedy. This scene, however, contains the germ of much later burlesque of the Olympians in Jonson's works. The part of Vulcan is played by the citizen Albius; the part of Venus by his wife Cloe; and the part of Mars by Captain Tucca; there is a good deal of jesting about cuckoldry which is not in the Homeric original.

In *The Hue and Cry after Cupid* (1608) Vulcan is the divine architect, the great artificer, standing before his own handiwork and explaining it to the audience; furthermore, in the printed version careful footnotes are appended to show his antique prestige in the works of Homer, Euripides, Pausanius, and Virgil.

Seven years after the performance of *The Hue and Cry* Ben opened hostilities by making Vulcan the patron saint of the alchemists in *Mercury Vindicated*. Vulcan as fire god has ample warrant in the classics, but Vulcan as the helper of the alchemists is surely an outgrowth of the complicated allegory of alchemy which developed during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In this allegorical convention each metal is represented by a planet, each planet rationalizing, so to speak, the god for whom it is named. In other words, the sun (Apollo) is gold, the moon (Diana) is silver, and so forth. For aught I know to the contrary, Ben is responsible for the addition of Vulcan, logical though it is in relation to the rest of the allegory. In *Mercury Vindicated* Mercury—partly a god and partly the volatile metal quicksilver so important in alchemic hocus-pocus—fleeing from

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 357; Smith, *Ben Jonson*, p. 240.

<sup>5</sup> G. B. Johnston, "Notes on Jonson's Execration upon Vulcan," *Modern Language Notes*, XLVI (March, 1931), 150-53.

his tormentors, Vulcan (fire) and his scrawny sooty sub-Vulcans (the threadbare alchemists), turns to the Sun (gold), here in the person of King James instead of the god Apollo.

In an already established allegory combining gods and natural properties the addition of Vulcan as fire requires less explanation than does the substitution of James for Apollo. This substitution justifies a digression. It is well to remember that a comparatively new system of allegory grew up in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, a system constructed largely by Spenser, but followed by innumerable poets, including Jonson himself. All students of Elizabethan literature know that Cynthia, or Diana, is likely to be the Queen herself in almost any work in which she appears. Jonson, in *Cynthia's Revels*, joins the more ambitious of the allegorizers; but even in the court epilogue of *Every Man Out of His Humour* he had approached them and in a way foreshadowed the masque *Mercury Vindicated* by making the glance of the goddess-queen cure Macilente of his envy. What could be more natural than that Diana's successor be Apollo? James must have felt the appropriateness keenly, especially in view of his known devotion to the muses. It is hardly surprising to find James addressed in Jonson's *Panegyre* (1603) as the sun of truth and goodness, who casts his eyes

Into those dark and deep concealed vaults,  
Where men commit black incest with their faults;  
And snore supinely in the stall of sin:  
Where Murder, Rapine, Lust, do sit within,  
Carousing humane blood in yron bowles,  
And make their den the slaughter-house of soules:  
From whose foule reeking cavernes first arise  
Those damps, that so offend all good mens eyes.

Allegory is not sustained throughout the poem as it is in the masque, but the quoted passage surely fulfills C. S. Lewis's requirements for good allegory: its meaning is clear, it cannot be translated into prose without losing much of its power, and it shows a vital grasp of a realized picture.<sup>6</sup> The sun king and alchemic imagery is fused in one of the very late poems, written to commemorate the birth of the future Charles II. The first-born of King Charles died a few hours

<sup>6</sup> Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, pp. 44-45, 124-25, 166-67.

after birth; the second, bearing the same name as the first, is spoken of first as the Phoenix, springing from the ashes of his brother:

Another Phœnix, though the first is dead,  
A second's flowne from his immortall bed,  
To make this our Arabia to be  
The nest of an eternal progeny.  
Choise Nature fram'd the former but to finde  
What error might be mended in Man-kinde . . .  
So this the building, that the modell was,  
The type of all that now is come to passe.

Then comes the alchemic imagery:

All that was but the prophesie of this:  
And when it did this after birth fore-runne,  
'Twas but the morning starre unto this Sunne;  
The dawning of this day, when Sol did think  
We having such a light, that he might wink,  
And we ne're misse his lustre: nay so soone  
As Charles was borne, he and the pale-fac'd Moon  
With envy then did copulate, to try  
If such a Birth might be produc'd i'th sky.  
What Heavenly favour made a starre appeare,  
To bid wise Kings to doe their homage here,  
And prove him truly Christian? <sup>7</sup>

In this passage alchemic allegory and Christianity have altered and diluted mythology almost out of existence; yet the poetic overtones are completely missed without some knowledge of the earlier stages of the cycle of development: the gods, rationalized as planets, asso-

<sup>7</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, pp. 362, 368. The poem itself is printed on p. 281. W. D. Briggs shuddered to think that Ben Jonson could be guilty of the image of the sun and moon copulating to produce a birth equal to that of the young prince; hence, at first, he proclaimed the poem probably spurious in one of his "Studies in Ben Jonson," *Anglia*, XXXVIII (1914), 119-20. Later, in view of his discovery of the image of the sun and moon copulating in the classical circles of Plutarch—a monthly conjunction by which the moon conceived—Briggs revised his opinion, "Studies in Ben Jonson," *Anglia*, XXXIX (1915), 252. Jonson's image, regardless of its classical ancestry, is probably best explained by a note in John Matthews Manley's edition of *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, p. 653: "The alchemists called gold 'sol' and silver 'luna,' and spoke of them as the father and mother of the elixir or philosopher's stone." Hence, the copulation of the sun and moon in Jonson's poem is the same type of alchemic imagery as that displayed in the masque *Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists*; although the poem has the additional reference to the star of Bethlehem and a similar astronomical phenomenon at the time of Charles's birth. See also John Livingston Lowes, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, pp. 18-19.

ciated in alchemy with certain metals—and finally in this poem the heavenly alchemy of the allusion to the nativity. I have dwelt at length on this passage, first, to point out how a single image was fused with other images without completely losing its identity, secondly, to illustrate what we shall find almost constantly in Jonson's poetry: material burlesqued in one or several works treated elsewhere in all seriousness. In other words, Jonson is the inheritor of many varied literary traditions, and it is unjust to expect him to follow the same tradition in every poem he writes.

But to return to Vulcan, whom we left in the company of the untransmuted alchemists of *Mercury Vindicated*: after the costly visit, in which the fire god devoured so many priceless papers, the poet declared war. In the "Execration" Vulcan again is linked with the contemned alchemists:

No mar'le the Clownes of Lemnos tooke thee up.  
 For none but Smiths would have made thee a God.  
 Some Alchimist there may be yet, or odde  
 Squire of the Squibs, against the Pageant day,  
 May to thy name a *Vulcanale* say;  
 And for it lose his eyes with Gun-powder,  
 As th' other may his braines with Quicksilver.

Much of the attack on Vulcan is carried out in this way: association of the god with every unpleasant, evil-smelling, humiliating use of fire which comes to the poet's mind. Instead of the powerful god who shrunk Scamander's flood at the command of his mother, Juno, Ben depicts the servant of the watermen on the "bankside":

They made a Vulcan of a sheafe of Reedes,  
 Whom thay durst handle in their holy-day coates.

Or he associates Vulcan with the friar who coöperated with the devil in the invention of guns.<sup>8</sup> The larger accomplishments, such as the

<sup>8</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, p. 399: "Perh. Roger Bacon, *q.v.*, more likely Berthold Schwarz, see Gonswart." *Ibid.*, p. 373: "Danish Gonswart, perh. Konstantin Anklitzen, a Franciscan friar better known as Berthold Schwarz . . . a famous chemist, who is supposed to have invented the gun about 1320 . . ."

See also Camden, *Remains*, p. 224: "One writeth, I know not upon what credit, that Roger Bacon, commonly called Fryer Bacon, knew to make an Engine, which with Saltpeter and Brimstone, should prove notable for battery, but he tendring the safety of mankind would not discover it.

"The best approved authors agree that they [guns] were invented in Germany, by

destruction of the Globe Theatre, Paul's steeple, and the Library at Alexandria, are the exploits of a sneaking criminal, not of a god. In asking for a writ, injunction, order, or decree against Vulcan, Ben suggests several punishments:

But to confine him to the Brew-houses,  
The Glasse-house, Dye-fats, and their Fornaces;  
To live in Sea-coale, and goe forth in smoake;  
Or lest that vapour might the Citie choake,  
Condemne him to the Brick-kills, or some Hill-  
foot (out in Sussex) to an iron Mill . . .  
Or in the Bell-mans Lanthorne like a spie,  
Burne to a snuffe, and then stinke out, and die.

In this last suggestion Ben is evidently drawing on his earlier epigram "On Spies" (Epigram LIX):

Spies, you are lights in State, but of base stuffe,  
Who, when you have burnt your selves downe to the snuffe,  
Stinke, and are throwne away. End faire enough.

But Vulcan is not a mere synonym for fire in the poem. Indeed, the most violent references are to his family affairs, which are favorite medieval literary gossip. Ernst Sieper, in his edition of Lydgate's *Reson and Sensuality* (EETS), pointed out the appearance of the story of the Mars-Venus-Vulcan triangle in the *Roman de la Rose*, *The Complaynt of Mars*, *The Knightes Tale*, *Troilus and Crisseyde*, the *Confessio Amantis*, and, of course, in *Reson and Sensuality*.<sup>9</sup> He might also have pointed out the passage treated by Bagby Atwood in "Some Minor Sources of Lydgate's 'Troy Book'":

---

Bertholde Swarte a Monk, skilful in Geber's Cookery or Alchymy, who tempering Brimstone and Saltpeter in a mortar, perceived the force by casting up the stone which covered it when a spark fell into it. But one saith he consulted with the devil for an offensive weapon, who gave him answer in this obscure oracle,

"Vulcanus gignat, pariat Natura, Minerva

Edoceat, nutrix ars erit atque dies.

Vis mea de nihilo, tria dent mihi corpora pastum:

Sunt soboles strages, vis, furor, atque fragor."

"By this instruction he made a trunk of iron with learned advice, crammed it with sulphure bullet, and putting thereto fire, found the effects to be destruction, violence, fury and roaring crack."

The appearance of Vulcan's name at the beginning of the "obscure oracle" indicates that here is the probable "source" of Jonson's line.

<sup>9</sup> Lydgate, *Reson and Sensuality*, ed. by Ernst Sieper, II, 116.

One of the most spirited episodes from Ovid is that which contains the story of Venus' adultery with Mars, and the lurid scandal created by Vulcan, the outraged husband. . . . Lydgate handles the episode in a clumsily humorous manner, and his sympathies seem to be with the lady. He scolds Vulcan soundly for his jealousy.<sup>10</sup>

Marston, probably Jonson's predecessor in the field of formal satire, uses "Vulcanian" as a generic term for cuckolds.<sup>11</sup>

However, Ben's objections to Vulcan and his contempt for those who made him a deity are not connected with jealousy. Venus falls as heavily under his scorn as her husband does; she is handled with the same flippant and vulgar disrespect that medieval stonecutters paid to their devils. She is patroness of the stews, and one of the punishments called down on Vulcan's head by the angry poet is a "civill curse":

Pox on thee Vulcan, thy Pandora's pox,  
And all the Evils that flew out of her box  
Light on thee: Or if those plagues will not doo,  
Thy Wives pox on thee, and *B.Bs.* too.

Medieval legend had transformed Venus into the malignant and beautiful sorceress of the Venusberg, and had made her a sort of anti-Virgin; but she had hardly reached bottom before her appearance in the "Execration." Poor Cressida had fallen no lower in Shakespeare's hands.

Of course, as might be expected, Venus as well as Vulcan played an honorable part in the masques and, unlike him, an honorable part in many of the poems. But the charming story of the runaway Cupid in *The Hue and Cry* is made the basis for burlesque in *Christmas, His Masque* (1616). In the latter, Venus, a "deafe Tire-woman," has come to see her son perform in the masque. Christmas tries in vain to make her leave the hall. Being as conveniently deaf as Fancy in Skelton's *Magnyfycence* or Subtle in *The Alchemist*, she answers his requests for her departure with:

Yes forsooth, I can sit any where, so I may see *Cupid* act; hee is a pretty Child, though I say it that perhaps should not, you will say: I had him by

<sup>10</sup> Atwood, "Some Minor Sources of Lydgate's 'Troy Book,'" *Studies in Philology*, XXXV (Jan., 1938), 31.

<sup>11</sup> Marston, *Works*, ed. by Bullen, III, 271.



my first Husband, he was a Smith forsooth, we dwelt in Doe-little lane then, he came a moneth before his time, and that may make him somewhat imperfect: But I was a Fishmongers daughter.

Goody Venus, in her incoherent babble, has told a large part of the story, down to her fishy origin—Neptune has his share in the comedy as the fishmonger. And this is "Idalian Aphrodite, ocean-born."

Venus and Cupid played such important roles in the code of courtly love that I shall reserve them for fuller treatment in Chapter IV without sulphurous Vulcan at their shoulders.

The comic method displayed in *Christmas, His Masque*, modernization and degradation of mythology, had already appeared in "The Famous Voyage," which is a burlesque Odyssey of two wights ("and Pitty 'tis I cannot call 'hem knights") from Bride-well to Hol'borne. Instead of calling on the muses or on his "owne true fire," Ben cries out for Hercules. His invocation gives the atmosphere—a very strong atmosphere—of the poem:

. . . but, me thinks 'tis od,  
 That all this while I have forgot some god,  
 Or goddesse to invoke, to stuffe my verse;  
 And with both bombard-stile, and phrase, rehearse  
 The many perills of this Port, and how  
 Sans'helpe of Sybil, or a golden bough,  
 Or magick sacrifice, they past along!  
 Alcides, be thou succouring to my song.  
 Thou'hast seene Hell (some say) and know'st all nookes there,  
 Canst tell me best, how every Fury lookes there,  
 And art a god, if Fame thee not abuses,  
 Always at hand, to aid the merry Muses.  
 Great Club-fist, though thy back, and bones be sore,  
 Still with thy former labours; yet, once more,  
 Act a brave worke, call it thy last adventry:  
 But hold my torch, while I describe the entry  
 To this dire passage. Say, thou stop thy nose:  
 'Tis but light paines: Indeed this Dock's no Rose.

Most Jonsonian scholars, agreeing with the last couplet here quoted and following its advice, have rushed past this poem with stopped nostrils and averted eyes. Swinburne probably had it in mind when he called the "Epigrams" "metrical emetics," and like the true born Englishman of Queen Victoria's day, he suggested that English poets

"should leave coprology to the French."<sup>12</sup> Gregory Smith also damned the "scatological voyage" (it did exercise the English vocabulary):

Happily for his reputation, Jonson seldom dipped his quill in sewage, as he does in this last intolerable piece. . . . It may or may not be something for extenuation that the piece is a burlesque, that the violent mingling of quasi-romance (with its tags of "Now Lordings, listen well," "It was the day, what time the powerful Moon," and the like) and the unsavoury details of the riverside is but the realist's or parodist's fun.<sup>13</sup>

Herford termed it "a bad joke which by way of a further joke, equally bad, he chose to include."<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, both jokes are Ben's; not any of Swinburne's "beetle-headed boobies" had a hand in them. Jonson excluded from the 1616 Folio several of his works (notably *The Case Is Altered*) which he felt more unworthy of his mature theories or in which other authors had a large hand (notably *Eastward Hoe*). There was no reason for his inclusion of the "Voyage" if he did not want it in the canon of his works. Why, then, did he include it (unless we accept the hypothesis of the joke)?

First, the poem is funny in full-blooded Rabelaisian manner; second, it is the learned comedy of a man thoroughly familiar with the works he is burlesquing, his beloved and revered classics, which he evidently loved this side idolatry; third, it borrows ideas and attitudes from one of the poet's masters, "the merry Greeke, tart Aristophanes."<sup>15</sup> Are not humor, learning, and classical precedent justifications for publishing the work? Jonson must have thought so, for he placed the poem at the end of the "ripest of his studies," the "Epigrams." Perhaps the only justification for so classifying the "Voyage" is that it does have a "point" in its concluding pun. Incidentally, it is not only the last of the "Epigrams," but also the longest by far.

Since the dock is, indeed, no rose and tastes at present demand

<sup>12</sup> Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 95.    <sup>13</sup> Smith, *Ben Jonson*, pp. 239-40.

<sup>14</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 341.

<sup>15</sup> Aside from the direct reference to *The Frogs*, there is a similarity to the Dung Beetle scenes in *Peace*, which also has a pun "skataibatos" conferring almost exactly the same characteristics on Zeus which "poor Mercury" displays in "The Voyage." See *The Complete Greek Drama*, ed. by W. J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, jr., II, 722.

less malodorous material, we had best confine ourselves as much as possible to the learning and the precedents. Before the poem proper there is a prologue, "On the Famous Voyage," which belittles the adventures of Hercules, Theseus, Orpheus, Ulysses, and Aeneas in Hell as palpable fictions, pays its respects to the croaking chorus from the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, and concludes with:

Then let the former age, with this content her,  
Shee brought the Poets forth, but ours th'adventer.

This is a comic orchestration of the theme in the "Ode" (Hellen did Homer never see) in "Under-wood":

Though I, in working of my song  
Come short of all this learned throng,  
Yet sure my tunes will be the best,  
So much my subject drownes the rest.

The first section of "The Voyage It Selfe," after the customary "I sing," and so forth, ends with a Chaucerian "Now, Lordings, listen well." A short series of former deeds surpassed by the voyage is followed by the invocation of Alcides; then the incidents of the actual voyage are related in three long sections. It is an interesting coincidence that the ghost of Andrea in *The Spanish Tragedy* also describes a voyage like that of Aeneas, which may possibly have influenced Jonson in his choice of this theme. Anything remotely connected with *The Spanish Tragedy* was fair game for the satirist.

The first part of the poem following the introductory passage covers the journey from Avernus to Styx (the four rivers of Hell are all included in a single stream, as Ben tells us in the prefatory poem). The heroes, conveyed by "a brace of charons," encountered "that ugly monster, Ycleped Mud," "ugly Centaures, yee call Car-men, Gorgonian scolds, and Harpyes," stench, diseases, filth, famine, want, and sorrow. When they reached Cocytus, they saw another fearful prodigy, which one of the adventurers thought Briareus, the other Hydra or Scylla; however, they proceeded boldly, when suddenly:

. . . downe fell, *ab excelsis*,  
Poore Mercury, crying out on Paracelsus,  
And all his followers, that had so abus'd him.

This is again the allegorical Mercury, but more the apothecary's than the alchemist's; Paracelsus here receives the scorn so often heaped on his followers. After his complaint against the indignities to which he is subjected, Mercury softly and silently vanished away like the Baker when he met the Boojum. However, we shall meet Mercury again later, though he will be disguised beyond recognition.

By this, the stemme  
Of the hulke touch'd, and, as by Polypheme  
The slie Ulysses stole in a sheeps-skin,  
The well-greas'd wherry now had got between,  
And bade her fare-well sough, unto the lurdén.

Here is a direct Homeric reference, but in the *Odyssey* Ulysses clung to the wool of the huge ram instead of wearing his skin like the wolf in the fable.

The following section, including the passage from Styx to Acheron, is perhaps the most repulsive part of the poem. Its chief importance to this study lies in a reference to the atomic doctrine of Democritus and his modern disciple Nicholas Hill.

The concluding section introduces one of the most interesting characters in the nondramatic poems:

Old Bankes the juggler, our Pythagoras,  
Grave tutor to the learned horse. Both which,  
Being, beyond sea, burned for one witch:  
Their spirits transmigrated to a cat:  
And, now, above the poole, a face right fat  
With great gray eyes, are lifted up, and mew'd;  
Thrice did it spit: thrice div'd. At last, it view'd  
Our brave Heroes with a milder glare,  
And, in a pittious tune, began . . .<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps there is a fine poetic justice in combining the souls of poor Bankes and poor Morocco in one body, even the body of a roasted cat, since the two walk together through many works in Elizabethan literature. Morocco, "the learned horse," was more famous than his master, but he shed a vicarious fame on the latter which may be a mild compensation for the fate they shared. It hardly seems fit matter for comedy to us that a horse-trainer and his horse should be burned

<sup>16</sup> Old Bankes is in a situation similar to that of Alessio Interminei in Canto XVIII of Dante's *Inferno*.

as witches simply because of the horse's remarkable accomplishments.<sup>17</sup>

As for Pythagoras he had almost become a mythological hero by the Elizabethan period: his somewhat grotesque figure is carved on the west façade of Chartres and harmonizes very well with the Christian surroundings. His theories were ridiculed by Horace (Book I, Ode 28), and were used for satiric purposes by Donne in the "Progress of the Soul"; but in the latter the satire is directed, not at the doctrine of metempsychosis or its originator, but at Donne's own contemporaries.

The heroes had already been plowing through various kinds of slop and animal matter, including "meazled" hogs and roasted cats, but Bankes warned them of future obstacles and dangers:

Behold where Cerberus, rear'd on the wall  
Of Hol'borne (three sergeants heads) lookes ore,  
And stays but till you come unto the dore!  
Tempt not his fury, Pluto is away:  
And Madame Caesar, great Proserpina,  
Is now from home. You lose your labours quite,  
Were you Jove's sons, or had Alcides might.  
They cry'd out Pusse. He told them he was Banks,  
That had, so often, shew'd 'hem merry pranks.  
They laugh't, at his laugh-worthy fate. And past  
The tripple head without a sop.

This is another evidence of the superior heroism of Shelton and Heydon: in the *Aeneid*, of course, the Sybil gave Cerberus a sop dipped in honey; in *The Spanish Tragedy* Don Andrea substituted "honeyed words"; in the "Voyage" the heroes passed their Cerberus (the inn-sign of the "Three Sergeants") with no tribute whatsoever. At their journey's end they met Rhadamanthus, a "sope-boyler," Aeacus, an alehouse keeper, and little Minos, an "ancient pur-blind fletcher." These Elizabethan judges of hell served as witnesses to the exploit of the voyagers, who immediately sailed back. The poem ends with a double pun:

And I could wish for their eterniz'd sakes,  
My Muse had plough'd with his, that sung A-jax.

<sup>17</sup> Morocco is alluded to by Shakespeare in *Love's Labour's Lost* and by Dekker in *Satiromastix*, I, ii; see *Jonson's Poetaster and Dekker's Satiromastix*, ed. by J. H. Penniman, pp. 405, 408. See also DNB, III, 125.

Certainly this last line refers to Sir John Harington,<sup>18</sup> in whose footsteps Ben was following when he wrote the "Voyage," but it must also refer to Homer, in whose footsteps he was capering.

Two of the plays use somewhat the same comic devices as the "Voyage." There is a similar play on Rhadamanthus and Minos in *Poetaster*; the passage occurs in the lines added by Jonson in his adaptation of Horace's Satire Nine from the First Book. Crispinus asks, "How call'st thou the pothecary?"

HORACE: O, that I knew a name would fright him now.

Sir Rhadamanthus, Rhadamanthus, sir.

There's one so call'd, is a just judge, in hell,

And doth inflict strange vengeance on all those,

That (here on earth) torment poore patient spirits.

CRISPINUS: He dwells at the Three Furies, by Janus Temple?

HORACE: Your 'pothecary does, sir.

CRISPINUS: Hart, I owe him money for sweet meates, and hee has laid to arrest me, I heare. . . . But his name is Minos, not Rhadamanthus, Horace.

HORACE: That may bee, sir: I but guest at his name by his signe. But your Minos is a judge too, sir?

It could possibly be mere coincidence, but Tucca salutes the apothecary as "little Minos," which is the epithet of the "pur-blind fletcher." Far more in the ribald spirit of the "Voyage" is Lanthorn Leatherhead's puppet-play of *Hero and Leander*, which Littlewit, the author, has made "a little easie, and *moderne* for the times":

As, for the Hellespont I imagine our Thames here; and then Leander, I make a Diers sonne, about Puddle-wharfe: and Hero a wench o' the Banke-side, who going over one morning to old fish-street; Leander spies her land at Trigsstayers, and falls in love with her: Now do I introduce Cupid, having Metamorphos'd himselfe into a Drawer, and hee strikes Hero in love with a pint of Sherry.

Most of the details of the actual puppet play are unquotable in polite society.

Are the "Execration" and the "Voyage" poems at all? Herford and Gregory Smith certainly accepted the "Execration" as one, and apparently rejected the "Voyage." Certainly neither poem is Shelleyan; but

<sup>18</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, p. 388.

both seem to me to fall within Jonson's definition of poetry in the *Discoveries*, though neither reaches or even strives to reach his ideal of the ethical purpose of poetry. Both are occasional pieces, one written purely for amusement, the other probably written to relieve natural irritation. However, both show imitation and assimilation of the classics (they could hardly be said to cull the sweetest flowers for their honey), and both add contemporary events and individuals to produce "things like the Truth." These things like the truth do violence to Keats's aphorism, but they would hardly have shocked Jonson's contemporaries or predecessors. Indeed, Gregory Smith commented specifically on the rarity of extreme coarseness for coarseness' sake in Jonson, particularly in comparison with his contemporaries, and even with Pope, who lived in a supposedly more restrained civilization.<sup>19</sup>

Judging from the success of *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*, the King himself was not averse to a little Rabelaisian humor for its own sake. But regardless of the taste of the time, vulgarity alone is not enough to make any poem worth reading. However, the "Voyage" does not depend on vulgarity alone: it fetches its origin from Homer; it parallels the visit of Aeneas to Hades so closely at points that Book VI of the *Aeneid* is an almost indispensable commentary on the "Voyage," as Homer's *Odyssey* is on Joyce's *Ulysses*; it tickles the reader's vanity with its learned pun and gives him glimpses, tantalizingly brief, of several "originals." Along with the "Execration" it bears the same relation to the plays that the sketches and grotesques of Leonardo and Michelangelo bear to their larger works. The Jonson of the grotesque poems is no more to be disregarded than the Leonardo of the caricatures, who drew repulsive individuals so well that a modern doctor can diagnose their diseases. But perhaps a still better comparison would be Jonson and Daumier. The latter's skinny "rabbit vendor" enticing alley cats into his bag might have stepped out of the "Voyage."

Although the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were unkind to Vulcan, Venus, and many other gods and goddesses, they were exceptionally kind to Pan: W. W. Greg pointed out the evolution of Pan under the influence of medieval Christianity; Pan became "a

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Ben Jonson*, p. 239.

shepherd of men," a sort of allegorical emblem of Christ.<sup>20</sup> Douglas Bush, commenting on Spenser alone, said: "These musical lines carry their own justification, but when, within the compass of the *Calendar*, we find that Pan is at various times Henry VIII, the pope, and Christ, we may be disconcerted."<sup>21</sup>

One certainly has a right to expect a writer who added to the degradation of the gods to make some amends; and Ben did. However, as usual, he followed both traditions. In *The Penates* (1604) Pan is the half-animal son of Mercury—this time the god Mercury, with no taint of the alchemic laboratory or the apothecary's shop. *Pan's Anniversary* (1625) is another allegory involving King James. When Pan is allowed to represent James, he is as much flattered by the poet as the King is. There are four hymns to Pan in this masque, the first of which is repeated almost verbatim in the poem "A New-Yeaes-Gift Sung to King Charles" (1635). One might surmise from the lateness of the date that the reason for the use of the old hymn, with the slightest possible alterations to make it fit the new occasion, was simply fatigue.

The principal change in the poem is that Pan is no longer the King; James, of course, had been dead about a decade, but Charles was not substituted for him in the poem. B. H. Newdigate's note indicates a detailed allegory in the poem: "A laureate piece, written to celebrate the alliance of Charles with his brother-in-law, Louis XIII (Pan). Mira is Henrietta Maria, Pales perhaps the emperor Ferdinand II or else king Philip IV of Spain."<sup>22</sup> If the allegory is as detailed as this note indicates, much of it is superimposed, since so many of the lines are repeated from the earlier masque. Besides, Jonson often combined personal references with purely historical or ideal references, as he did in *Poetaster*.

In the praise of Pan there is little essential difference between the hymns in the masque and the poem; "Hymne I":

## I

Of Pan we sing, the best of Singers Pan  
That taught us swaines, how first to tune our layes,  
And on the pipe more aires then Phoebus can.

CHORUS: Heare O you groves, and hills resound his praise.

<sup>20</sup> Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama*, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry*, p. 95.

<sup>22</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, p. 363.



## 2

Of Pan we sing, the best of Leaders, Pan  
 That leads the Nayad's, and the Dryad's forth;  
 And to their daunces more then Hermes can.  
 CHORUS: Heare O you groves, and hills, resound his worth.

## 3

Of Pan we sing, the best of Hunters, Pan  
 That drives the Heart to seeke unused wayes,  
 And in the chace more then Sylvanus can,  
 CHORUS: Heare, O you groves, and hills resound his praise.

## 4

Of Pan we sing, the best of Shepherds, Pan,  
 That keepes our flocks, and us, and both leads forth  
 To better pastures then great Pales can:  
 CHORUS: Heare O you groves, and hills resound his worth.  
 And while his powers, and praises thus we sing  
 The Valleys let rebound, and all the rivers ring.

The Alexandrine with which the final chorus closes is at least a bow in the direction of Spenser, whose melody echoes in several parts of the hymn. "Hymne II" continues the strain of praise:

Pan is our All, by him we breath, wee live,  
 Wee move, we are; 'Tis he our lambes doth reare,  
 Our flocks doth blesse, and from the store doth give  
 The warme and finer fleeces that we weare.  
 He keepes away all heates, and colds,  
 Drives all diseases from our folds:  
 Makes every where the spring to dwell,  
 The Ewes to feed, their udders swell;  
 But if he frowne, the sheepe (alas)  
 The Shepheards wither, and the grasse.  
 Strive, strive, to please him then by still increasing thus  
 The rites are due to him, who doth all right for us.

The third hymn, an echo song, plays such a small part in the construction of "A New-Yeaes-Gift" that it may be entirely omitted here without great loss. The fourth, however, is very close in phraseology to the later poem:

Great Pan the Father of our peace, and pleasure,  
 Who giv'st us all this leasure,  
 Heare what thy hallowd troope of Herdsmen pray  
 For this their Holy-day,  
 And how their vowes to Thee, they in Lycaenum pay.

## THE LAME LORD OF FIRE

So may our Ewes receive the mounting Rammes,  
 And wee bring thee the earliest of our Lambes:  
 So may the first of all our fells be thine,  
 And both the beestning of our Goates, and Kine  
     As thou our folds dost still secure,  
     And keep'st our fountaines sweet and pure  
     Driv'st hence the Wolfe, the Tode, the Brock,  
     Or other vermine from the flock.  
 That wee preserv'd by Thee, and thou observ'd by us  
 May both live safe in shade of thy lov'd Maenalus.

"A New-Yeares-Gift" is apparently an elaborate cantata. It begins with an invocation to all loyal swains, bidding them hasten to pay their first fruits to the King. The first strophe is a synthesis of the second and fourth hymns:

1. Pan is the great Preserver of our bounds.
  2. To him we owe all profits of our grounds.
  3. Our milke.
  4. Our fells.
  5. Our fleeces.
  6. and first Lambes.
  7. Our teeming Ewes,
  8. and lustie-mounting Rammes.
  9. See where he walkes with Mira by his side.
- CHOR. Sound, sound his praises loud, and with his, hers divide.

The praise of Pan which follows is altered from the first hymn so that it includes Mira (certainly Henrietta Maria, as Newdigate suggested):

Of Pan wee sing, the best of Hunters, Pan,  
 That drives the Hart to seeke unused wayes,  
 SHEP. And in the chase, more then Sylvanus can,  
 CHOR. Heare, ô you Groves, and, Hills, resound his praise.  
     Of brightest Mira, doe we raise our Song,  
     Sister of Pan, and glory of the Spring:  
 NYM. Who walkes on earth as May still went along,  
 CHOR. Rivers, and Vallies, Eccho what wee sing.  
 SHEP. Of Pan wee sing, the Chiefe of Leaders, Pan,  
 CHOR. That leades our flocks and us, and calls both forth  
     To better Pastures then great Pales can:  
     Heare, O you Groves, and, Hills, resound his worth.

Then follows another stanza to Mira, sung by the chorus of nymphs, and following that another strophe similar to the one which opened the praises. In this strophe two soloists alternate, and the chorus ends their dialogue. One line in the solo parts is: "Pan only our great Shep'ard is."

From this point on, the poem ceases its praise of Pan (in this poem *not* the English king) and Mira, and pays homage to King Charles:

This is the great Preserver of our bounds . . .  
 Whose praises let's report unto the Woods,  
 That they may take it eccho'd by the Floods.  
     'Tis hee, 'tis hee, in singing hee,  
     And hunting, Pan, exceedeth thee.  
     Hee gives all plentie, and encrease,  
     Hee is the author of our peace.  
     Where e're he goes upon the ground,  
     The better grasse, and flowers are found.  
     To sweeter Pastures lead hee can,  
     Then ever Pales could, or Pan;  
     Hee drives diseases from our Folds,  
     The theefe from spoyle, his presence holds.  
     Pan knowes no other power then his,  
     This only the great Shep'ard is.

C. F. Wheeler gives classical sources for all the *dramatis personae* except Mira ("Pan has no sister named Mira in mythology").<sup>23</sup> He also gives references, somewhat widely scattered, for almost all the characteristics assigned to Pan. However, Greg's statement is supported by the similarities to the Twenty-third Psalm in both masque and poem. Although there is antique authority for Pan as hunter and singer, the emphasis on these two characteristics in a masque for James I is surely intended to flatter the King, whose delight in hunting and in writing poetry were well known.

Drayton also gave both conceptions of Pan, in two different versions of the same poem, although as Douglas Bush has shown, the revised piece is practically a new poem.<sup>24</sup> In *Endimion and Phoebe* "rude Pan" sounded his Tabret to amuse the nymphs and satyrs;<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Wheeler, *Classical Mythology in . . . Jonson*, p. 146.

<sup>24</sup> Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition*, pp. 157 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Drayton, *The Works*, ed. by Hebel, I, 129.

in *The Man in the Moone* there is a ceremony similar to that in *Pan's Anniversary*:

It was the time when (for their good Estate)  
The thankefull Shepheards yeerely celebrate  
A Feast, and Bone-fires on the Vigills keepe,  
To the Great Pan, preserver of their Sheepe.<sup>26</sup>

And still another of the contemporary poets with whom Jonson had close relations, John Fletcher, painted the idealized Pan, in his *Faithful Shepherdess*. The litany chanted by the Priest of Pan is in striking contrast to poems or prose works which make Pan the embodiment of animal passions and worldly joys; it is a prayer that Pan preserve his followers from "willfulness, lust, dieases, sores, or pain." All the shepherds join in a hymn to the "God of Sheep," taught them by Dorus, "he that was the soul and god of melody." This hymn (probably written before 1610) is close enough in idea to Jonson's hymns to deserve quotation:

All ye woods, and trees, and bowers,  
All ye virtues and ye powers  
That inhabit in the lakes,  
In the pleasant springs or brakes,  
Move your feet  
To our sound,  
Whilst we greet  
All this ground  
With his honour and his name  
That defends our flocks from blame.

He is great, and he is just  
He is ever good, and must  
Thus be honoured. Daffadillies,  
Roses, pinks, and loved lillies,  
Let us fling,  
Whilst we sing  
Ever holy,  
Ever holy,  
Ever honoured, ever young!  
Thus great Pan is ever sung!<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 574.

<sup>27</sup> Fletcher, John, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, V, v. The second stanza contains

It is possible that Fletcher intended his audience to associate the "virtues" and the "powers" in the second line of this hymn with two of the orders in the angelic hierarchy as well as with the pagan nymphs and geniuses. Such an association was in keeping with the traditions of pastoral poetry in the Renaissance. Bush called attention to Drayton's use of the angels in a mythological poem: "Endimion and Phoebe . . . has not a back strong enough to bear the load of Drayton's beloved 'nines and threes,' the business of the celestial hierarchies inherited from Dionysius the Areopagite."<sup>28</sup> There is even a trace of the mingling in one of Jonson's poems and a definite mingling in another. The first of these is "The Musical Strife; in a Pastoral Dialogue." Two lovers engage in a singing contest with notes "To stay the running floods, To make the Mountaine Quarries move, And call the walking woods." Herford remarked that the verses "do little to persuade us of the Orphean magic which the singers ascribe to their own or each other's songs."<sup>29</sup> This Orphean magic is topped by some Christian magic:

## SHEE

They say the Angells marke each Deed,  
And exercise below,  
And out of inward pleasure feed  
On what they viewing know.

## HEE

O sing not you then, lest the best  
Of Angels should be driven  
To falle againe; at such a feast,  
Mistaking earth for heaven.

## SHEE

Nay, rather both our soules bee strayn'd  
To meet their high desire;  
So they in state of Grace retain'd,  
May wish us of their Quire.

---

reminiscences of Spenser's "April Eclogue" from *The Shepheards Calender*, which also contains the varied references to Pan. Spenser's lines read:

Strowe me the ground with Daffadowndillies,  
And Cowslips, and Kingcups, and loved Lillies.

<sup>28</sup> Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition*, p. 162.

<sup>29</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 389. The comment neglects the possibility that the piece was set to music and that some of the "magic" might have been added by melody and harmony.

William Alfred Eddy pointed out Dryden's quotation of, "Mistaking earth for Heaven" in his "Song for St. Cecilia's Day."<sup>30</sup> One stanza in this poem is almost a condensation of Jonson's "Musicall Strife" without the last conceit. Dryden, however, is specific in his juxtaposition of Orpheus and the angel:

Orpheus could lead the savage race;  
And trees unrooted left their place,  
Sequacious of the lyre;  
But bright Cecilia raised the wonder higher:  
When to her organ vocal breath was given,  
An angel heard, and straight appeared,  
Mistaking earth for heaven.

In the second poem mingling angels with mythology Ben presents the nine muses singing an ode to the Queen. Wheeler's statement that "muse" in Jonson often means simply "poetic inspiration" or "poet,"<sup>31</sup> of course, does not apply to this poem, since each muse speaks, or rather sings, a stanza. The rhyme scheme, by the way, is one of those that are extremely common in medieval hymns and secular pieces.<sup>32</sup> Euterpe, the fourth muse to sing, recalls "The Musicall Strife":

That when the Quire is full,  
The Harmony may pull  
The Angels from their Spheares:  
And each intelligence  
May wish itselſe a ſenſe;  
Whilst it the Dittie heares.

This music is assigned a more difficult task than the two lovers' songs: it is not only to draw the angels down but also to make them wish to change their substance and become "senses" rather than pure "intelligences."

Jonson, then, in common with most of his contemporaries, was not a purist in his mythology or, one is tempted to add, in his religion, though his angels are far more likely to intrude in a mythological

<sup>30</sup> Eddy, "Dryden Quotes Ben Jonson," *MLN*, XLVI, 40-41.

<sup>31</sup> Wheeler, *Classical Mythology in . . . Jonson*, p. 147.

<sup>32</sup> See Berdan, *Early Tudor Poetry*, pp. 149, 219; also Beeson, *A Primer of Medieval Latin*, pp. 360 ("Stabat Mater"), 364, 370; and Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century* and *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, *passim*.

setting than a pagan god or goddess to gain entry into a religious poem. Occasionally, as in the Orphean references in "The Musicall Strife" the actual myth is only hinted at; but thorough assimilation of the myth in the figure does not prevent its adding poetic overtones. Such a residue of mythology is evident in "The Vision of Ben. Jonson, on the Muses of his Friend M. Drayton." Like the far more famous tribute to Shakespeare, the first ten (slightly more in the poem to Shakespeare) lines are a sort of preamble; the poem proper begins:

It was no Dreame! I was awake, and saw!  
Lend me thy voyce, O Fame, that I may draw  
Wonder to truth! and have my Vision hoorld,  
Hot from thy trumpet, round, about the world.  
I saw a Beauty from the Sea to rise,  
That all Earth look'd on; and that earth, all Eyes! <sup>33</sup>

Certainly at this point most readers will have a glimpse of "Seaborne Venus"; probably many of them will see in the mind's eye Botticelli's Venus; however, the image develops in an entirely different direction:

It cast a beame as when the chear-full Sun  
Is fayre got up, and day some houres begun!  
And fill'd an Orbe as circular, as heaven!  
The Orbe was cut forth into Regions seaven.  
And those so sweet, and well proportion'd parts,  
As it had been the circle of the Arts! <sup>34</sup>

The "Ode Allegorike," written for Hugh Holland's *Pancharis* (1603),<sup>35</sup> has a similar, but more definite residue of mythology—so much more definite, indeed, that Charles Francis Wheeler attempted a more thorough explanation of it as mythology than it will bear.<sup>36</sup> The allusion to Cynus (Cygnus, the swan, the constellation) is the secondary, not the primary element in the poem. The swan made black by Apollo's love is Holland himself, who in *Pancharis* refers to his dark complexion and black beard; as a poet he is beloved of

<sup>33</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, p. 245.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 252-55.

<sup>36</sup> Wheeler, *Classical Mythology in . . . Jonson*, pp. 76-77: "Cynus, because of the destruction of his relative Phaeton, went lamenting through the world, and was eventually transformed into a swan (*Met.*, 2.366-380). This version of the Cynus myth is probably J's basis, but here the swan has become black. . . . Cf., Apollo's ire which caused the raven, once white, to become black."

Apollo; as a swan he is sacred to Venus, that is, a love poet; hence the black swan.<sup>37</sup> That he is disclosed as Cygnus is merely mythologized allegory, not allegorized myth:

But should they know (as I) that this,  
 Who warbleth Pancharis,  
 Were Cynus, once high flying  
 With Cupids wing;  
 Though, now by Love transform'd, and dayly dying:  
 (Which makes him sing  
 With more delight, and grace)  
 Or thought they, Leda's white Adult'ers place  
 Among the starres should be resign'd  
 To him, and he there shrin'd;  
 Or Tames be rap't from us  
 To dimme and drowne  
 In heav'n the Signe of old Eridanus:  
 How they would frowne!  
 But these are Mysteries  
 Conceal'd from all but cleare Propheticke eyes.<sup>38</sup>

Wheeler's chief difficulty is with Eridanus:

The bird's flight through Jonson's contemporary world is followed by an allusion that is not clear: 'In heaven the sign of old Eridanus.' This sign may be the epitaph which the Naiads made for Phaeton (*Met.*, 2. 325-328), or it may be the amber for which Eridanus is celebrated (e.g. Lucian's *Gods*, 25).<sup>39</sup>

The solution of this difficulty is probably much simpler than a shaded reference to an epitaph or amber. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* gives under "Eridanus":

In astronomy, a large constellation of the Southern hemisphere . . . *Eridanus fluvius* is the name under which the constellation appears in the catalogue of Tycho Brahe, Eridanus being a Greek river-god and also an ancient name for the river Po, in Italy.

All Jonson's passage means is that Holland, the black swan, may replace Leda's swan as a constellation and that the Thames, by virtue of its poet, may become a constellation in place of Eridanus.

<sup>37</sup> Holland, *Pancharis*, p. 17: "Black though I be . . ." and on p. 49 the author describes himself: "A tawney face befur'd with sable haire, Borne under old Saturnus starre combust."

<sup>38</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, p. 255.

<sup>39</sup> Wheeler, *Classical Mythology in . . . Jonson*, pp. 76-77.



Although this is not a study of Jonson's "influence" on later English poetry, several passages in this ode deserve quotation for their similarity in phrases, rhythm, and vowel sounds to Milton's *Lycidas* (Milton was born five years after this ode was written).

He shew'd him first the hoofe-cleft Spring  
 Neere which, the Thespiad's sing;  
 The cleare Dircaean Fount  
 Where Pindar swamme;  
 The pale Pyrene, and the forked Mount. . . .

Salute old Mone,  
 But first to Cluid stoope low,  
 The Vale, that bred thee pure, as her Hills Snow. . . .

There charme the rout  
 With thy soft notes, and hold them within Pale. . . .

Who (see) already hath ore-flowne  
 The Hebrid Isles, and knowne  
 The scatter'd Orcades;  
 From thence is gon  
 To utmost Thule: whence he backes the Seas  
 To Caledon,  
 And over Grampius mountaine,  
 To Loumond lake, & Twedes blacke-springing fountaine.<sup>40</sup>

Jonson's "rout" is composed of Irishmen, Milton's of Bacchantes; and most of Jonson's geography is seen from above in the bird's flight, Milton's from below the sea. But in both there is a definite naturalizing of myth in the geography of Great Britain—none, however, more startling than Holland's in *Pancharis*: Diana, the moon goddess and probably an anachronistic representation of Queen Elizabeth, is entertained by Queen Katherine with "bisket-bread" and "marmalad," which surely show true British hospitality.<sup>41</sup>

Herford spoke somewhat slightly of one of Jonson's poems which placed mythological characters in an English landscape;<sup>42</sup> the passage occurs in "Penshurst":

Thou hast thy walkes for health, as well as sport:  
 Thy Mount, to which the Dryads doe resort,

<sup>40</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, pp. 252, 253-54.

<sup>41</sup> Holland, *Pancharis*, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 369.

## THE LAME LORD OF FIRE

Where Pan, & Bacchus their high feasts have made,  
 Beneath the broad beech, and the chest-nut shade;  
 That taller tree, which of a nut was set,  
 At his great birth, where all the Muses met.  
 There, in the writhed barke, are cut the names  
 Of many a Sylvine, taken with his flames[.]  
 And thence the ruddy Satyres oft provoke  
 The lighter Faunes, to reach thy Ladies oke.

Cynthia, on her way to visit Queen Katherine for her "bisket-bread" and "marmalad," saw similar beeches:

. . . there was, beside  
 The smooth skinn'd beech, all kerved as did passe,  
 In curious knotts that did the names enshrine  
 Of many a lover, and of many a lasse.<sup>43</sup>

Jonson and Holland simply introduce their gods into English landscape without benefit of vision. The earliest writers, including Skelton, usually went to sleep before they saw their gods or goddesses. In *The Garland of Laurel* the poet wanders in an English wood:

Thus stode I in the frytthy forest of Galtres,  
 Ensowkid with sylt of the myry mose,  
 Where hartis belluyng, embosyd with distres,  
 Ran on the raunge. . . .<sup>44</sup>

Closing his eyes, the poet, "halfe in a slepe," saw Dame Pallas and the Queen of Fame.

There is a tempting analogy to this in "To Sir Robert Wroth"; Herford commented on the "flash of vivid experience" in the lines:

Or, if thou list the night in watch to breake,  
 A-bed canst heare the loud stag speake,  
 In spring, oft roused for their masters sport. . . .

Some lines later are examples of "decorative embellishments in the style of pseudo-classical pastoral":<sup>45</sup>

Thus Pan, and Sylvine, having had their rites,  
 Comus puts in, for new delights;

<sup>43</sup> Holland, *Pancharis*, p. 21.

<sup>44</sup> Skelton, *The Poetical Works*, ed. by Dyce, I, 362. H. M. Ayres suggests that "mose" may be a misprint for "wose" (ooze).

<sup>45</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 369.

And fils thy open hall with mirth, and cheere,  
 As if in Saturnes raigne it were;  
 Apollo's Harpe, and Hermes lyre resound,  
 Nor are the Muses strangers found:  
 The rout of rurall folk come thronging in,  
 (Their rudenesse then is thought no sin). . . .

The gods are not really present in this scene, since each is used as personified activity rather than as a person; but the classical references are sandwiched between the stag, the "hogs return'd home fat from mast," and the "rout of rurall folk."<sup>46</sup>

I have not tried to cover every possible use of mythology in the poetry of Jonson. For the reader who wishes an exhaustive treatment of the subject Wheeler's book, *Classical Mythology in the Plays, Masques, and Poems of Ben Jonson*, will furnish ample material. However, all studies of classic myths in English literature should be tempered with Douglas Bush's admirable work, since even Jonson was deeply affected by the numerous changes in mythology after classical times. I have chosen to emphasize the living and contemporary qualities in his treatment rather than the original sources of the myths.

One of his standard attitudes, the most Jonsonian of all, is paradoxically a borrowing from his beloved Horace; but Jonson carries the idea farther than Horace would have dared to:

How many equall with the Argive Queene,  
 Have beauty knowne, yet none so famous seene?  
 Achilles was not first, that valiant was,  
 Or, in an armies head, that lockt in brasse,  
 Gave killing strokes. There were brave men, before  
 Ajax, or Idomen, or all the store,  
 That Homer brought to Troy; yet none so live:  
 Because they lack'd the sacred pen, could give  
 Like life unto 'hem. Who heav'd Hercules  
 Unto the starrs? or the Tyndarides?  
 Who placed Jasons Argo in the skie?  
 Or set bright Ariadnes crowne so high?  
 Who made a lampe of Berenices hayre?

<sup>46</sup> Both "Penshurst" and "To Sir Robert Wroth" owe much to Horace; the first half of the latter being almost a condensed and Anglicized paraphrase of the famous Second Epode, excluding the acid epilogue on Alpius the Usurer.

Or lifted Cassiopea in her chayre?  
But only Poets, rapt with rage divine?

The gods had been allegorized, and they had been rationalized as influences of the stars and planets; but here the constellations and their accompanying legends are glorified as the creations of the poets. This passage comes very near assigning poetry the place William Blake gives it in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. The poet is creator, and his creations are subordinate. There is, however, no such attitude in Jonson's religious poetry. The supposedly arrogant giant spoke in sacred verse with humility. It is, of course, impossible to say which is "sincere," the arrogance or the humility. All that is necessary is that he followed both traditions, and followed them well.

### CHAPTER III

## *Humble Gleanings in Divinitie*

**A**MONG the works devoured by Vulcan which Ben would gladly have ransomed with "many a Reame" were:

... twice-twelve-yeares stor'd up humanitie,  
With humble Gleanings in Divinitie;  
After the Fathers, and those wiser Guides  
Whom Faction had not drawne to studie sides.

Many of the humble gleanings must survive in the religious poems written over many years of Jonson's poetic career. Since some of the poems partly or wholly religious were printed in the 1616 Folio, a spirit of retraction, or turning away from worldly things in old age, cannot be held entirely responsible for the poetic use of the gleanings. But the increasing number of religious poems written during the closing years of the poet's life may well indicate increasing interest in things of the spirit. There are other grounds for this assumption.

The Oxford *Ben Jonson* contains two interesting pictures of Ben in his old age: first, the impudent lines of Michael Oldisworth, written, presumably, in 1632.<sup>1</sup> These lines sketch a portrait of an old-style Hell-fire-and-brimstone preacher, presumptuous enough to try to teach "Us Scholars" how to preach; they conclude with a warning that future ages may take Jonson for a bishop instead of a poet. The second picture, the product of a "less authentic but still probable tradition," shows still more clearly the spirit of the Chaucerian retractions: "His old friend George Morley, afterwards Bishop of Winchester, told Walton that in the poet's long retirement and sickness he had visited him and found him 'much afflicted that he had profaned the Scriptures in his plays and lamented it with horror.'" <sup>2</sup>

Jonson wrote almost every type of religious verse except an epic; and even so, although he wrote no *Divine Comedy* or *Paradise Lost*, his longest sustained piece of original nondramatic poetry, "The Apotheosis, or Elegy on My Muse," is essentially a religious poem.

There are two main streams in English religious poetry, and there is at least one important tributary. While it is impossible to draw

<sup>1</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, I, 113.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 115.

an exact line between them, the principal divisions, according to Carleton Brown, are the popular and the theological lyrics—the former similar to the popular ballad, the latter sophisticated forerunners of the metaphysical poems.<sup>3</sup> The important tributary is made up of moral pieces, some with “a homiletic flavour.”<sup>4</sup> In the works of a poet like Jonson there are obvious difficulties in separating those moral pieces indebted to the classics from those indebted to the native religious tradition; therefore I shall not try to consider with any exhaustive care this third or tributary group of poems. Let me say only that C. R. Baskervill found “a Christian and Anglican turn”<sup>5</sup> to Jonson’s dramatic use of the didacticism of the classics. This class may be illustrated with one brief moral poem of unmistakable origins:

OF LIFE, AND DEATH (EPIGRAM LXXX)

The ports of Death are sins; of Life, good deeds:  
Through which, our merit leads us to our meeds.  
How wilfull blind is he then, that should stray,  
And hath it, in his powers, to make his way!  
This World Deaths region is, the other Lives:  
And here, it should be one of our first strifes,  
So to front death, as men might judge us past it.  
For good men but see Death, the wicked tast it.

In essence this poem is not far from the philosophy of the Stoics, but “The ports of Death are sins” and “This World Deaths region is, the other Lives” betray the source of inspiration as Christian, not pagan.

It is hard to discriminate with exactness between popular religious lyrics and theological poetry in the fifteenth century; it is still harder to draw definite lines of demarcation in the works of a single poet. But there are certain normal characteristics of the two schools of religious poetry, and Jonson’s religious poetry usually shows the characteristics of one or the other school.

Although there may be exceptions, generally the popular religious lyrics are written in stanzas which might well be sung; their most common meters are simple quatrains or stanzas which J. M. Berdan calls medieval hymn forms. The latter are usually rhymed *aabccb*,

<sup>3</sup> Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, p. xxv.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxix.

<sup>5</sup> Baskervill, *English Elements in Jonson’s Early Comedy*, p. 24.

*aaabcccb*, or some similar pattern. The length of the lines is not exactly the same in all stanzas; usually the *b* lines of the six-line stanza and the *c* lines of the eight-line stanza are shorter than the others. There can be no hard and fast rule laid down, because some poems which otherwise seem to belong to the popular religious lyrics are in rhyme royal. Lydgate wrote his religious poems in the same meters he used in his secular poetry, chiefly rhyme royal and heroic couplets, sometimes shorter couplets, sometimes quatrains. In H. N. McCracken's edition of Lydgate's religious poems (EETS, Extra Series, CVII) not a single piece is in any of the common hymn stanzas. Lydgate, although he wrote on subjects in both traditions, may well serve as an example of the theological poet.

One of the most common of the popular themes was penitence. Frank Allen Patterson points out that some penitential lyrics are mystic rather than scholastic: that is, they are expressions of emotion rather than of reason and are concerned primarily with "a union with God in this earthly life," a union to be reached by faith rather than by intellect.<sup>6</sup> He also finds one of the most important sources for these lyrics in the liturgy. In view of the liturgical origin of English drama, Carleton Brown's belief that medieval drama deeply affected the popular religious lyrics of the time is logical and probable. Jonson's poems most indebted to the popular religious tradition are "To Heaven" (in "The Forest") and "Poems of Devotion" (in "Under-wood"). The first of these is the best known and most highly commended of the author's religious poems:

Good, and great God, can I not think of thee,  
 But it must, straight, my melancholy bee?  
 Is it interpreted in mee disease,  
 That, laden with my sinnes, I seeke for ease?  
 O, be thou wnesse, that the reines dost know,  
 And hearts of all, if I be sad for show,  
 And judge mee after: if I dare pretend  
 To ought but grace, or ayme at other end.  
 As thou art all, so be thou all to mee,  
 First, midst, and last, converted one, and three;  
 My faith, my hope, my love: and in this state,  
 My judge, my wnesse, and my advocate.

<sup>6</sup> Patterson, *Middle English Penitential Lyrics*, p. 4.

Where have I been this while exil'd from thee?  
 And whither rapt, now thou but stoup'st to mee?  
 Dwell, dwell here still: O, being every-where,  
 How can I doubt to finde thee ever, here?  
 I know my state, both full of shame, and scorne,  
 Conceiv'd in sinne, and unto labour borne,  
 Standing with feare, and must with horror fall,  
 And destin'd unto judgement, after all.  
 I feele my griefes too, and there scarce is ground,  
 Upon my flesh t'inflict another wound.  
 Yet dare I not complaine, or wish for death  
 With holy Paul, lest it be thought the breath  
 Of Discontent; or that these prayers bee  
 For wearinesse of life, not love of thee.

The formal difference between this poem and the popular lyric is immediately apparent; this is written in Jonson's favorite heroic couplets along with most of the rest of his nondramatic poetry; therefore its contents alone tie it to the earlier religious poetry. It has usually been interpreted as a completely personal expression. The poem escaped Swinburne's sweeping condemnation of most of Jonson's poetry. He not only praised it highly but also interpreted the first couplet so that the whole poem gained in intelligibility:

The opening couplet of the striking address "to Heaven" has been, it seems to me, misunderstood by Gifford; the meaning is not—"Can I not think of God without its making me melancholy?" but "Can I not think of God without its being imputed or set down by others to a fit of dejection?"<sup>7</sup>

Herford spoke of the "searching individual accent of the lines."<sup>8</sup> Without, however, wishing to minimize either the excellence or the individual sincerity of the poem, I think it more than a mere personal outburst. It is certainly a personal record of mystic experience; but Helen C. White warns that the mystic and the poet are essentially different: one seeking to reach God, the other to express himself in poetry.<sup>9</sup> And Jonson, though on occasion daring great experi-

<sup>7</sup> Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 103.

<sup>8</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 392; Herford also says on p. 391: "In the few 'divine' songs . . . art is wholly subordinate to religious passion."

<sup>9</sup> White, *The Metaphysical Poets*, Introduction. This, I confess, may be hair-splitting worthy of the Schoolmen themselves; however, there is something to be said for the belief that a poet is bound to divide his interest between craftsmanship on the one hand and emotion or thought on the other.



ments, generally preferred to express himself with the substance and the tools that had survived the years. After the decidedly personal beginning, the poem develops along the lines of a typical penitential lyric: the poet is laden with his sins; he dares not pretend "to ought but grace"; he addresses the Trinity:

First, midst, and last, converted one, and three;  
My faith, my hope, my love: and in this state,  
My judge, my witsse, and my advocate.

I have found no exact analogy to these lines in Brown's or Patterson's collections; but the triple repetition of the Trinity is thoroughly in keeping with the "nines" and "threes" of the medieval Church; and making faith, hope, and love (charity) refer to the persons of the Trinity is equally in keeping with the allegorizing tendency of the Middle Ages.

The return of the exile to God, the shameful state, "conceiv'd in sinne, and unto labour borne," the griefs, and the wounded flesh are characteristic of the penitent; but with his concluding lines Jonson makes the traditional material sound deeply personal, almost as individual as Donne's "Hymne to God the Father" (especially in Donne's final stanza: "I have a sinne of fear"). It is this ability to make traditional material sound deeply personal that makes Jonson a great poet and paradoxically leads to his being misinterpreted and misunderstood. This is true not only of his religious poetry but also of the satiric. Critics find biography in lines which may be the product of moods only, or of traditions assimilated and applied personally.

"To Heaven" closes on the note of divine love-longing, which, although it had for centuries been expressed by the mystics, gives the impression that Jonson the individual is speaking; the three "Poems of Devotion," though similar in thought and phraseology to the earlier piece, betray no more personal individuality than the innumerable anonymous poets represented in Brown's and Patterson's collections. They are, for that reason, less appealing to an audience which has little sympathy with the penitential tradition and holds "self-expression" as one of the tenets of its faith. Also, the latter poems are written in medieval hymn forms, not in the familiar heroic couplet.

“The Sinners Sacrifice” and “A Hymne to God the Father” begin dramatically with direct address.

THE SINNERS SACRIFICE

*To the Holy Trinitie*

O holy, blessed, glorious Trinitie  
 Of persons, still one God, in Unitie.  
 The faithfull mans beleev'd Myserie,  
     Helpe, helpe to lift  
 Myselfe up to thee, harrow'd, torne, and bruise'd  
 By sinne, and Sathan; and my flesh misus'd,  
 As my heart lies in peeces, all confus'd,  
     O take my gift.

All-gracious God, the Sinners sacrifice.  
 A broken heart thou wert not wont despise,  
 But 'bove the fat of rammes, or bulls, to prize  
     An offering meet,  
 For thy acceptance. O, behold me right,  
 And take compassion on my grievous plight.  
 What odour can be, then a heart contrite,  
     To thee more sweet?

Eternall Father, God, who did'st create  
 This All of nothing, gavest it forme, and fate,  
 And breath'st into it, life, and light, with state  
     To worship thee.  
 Eternall God the Sonne, who not denyd'st  
 To take our nature; becam'st man, and dyd'st,  
 To pay our debts, upon thy Crosse, and cryd'st,  
     All's done in me.

Eternall Spirit, God from both proceeding,  
 Father and Sonne; the Comforter, in breeding  
 Pure thoughts in man: with fiery zeale them feeding  
     For acts of grace.  
 Increase those acts, ô glorious Trinitie  
 Of persons, still one God in Unitie;  
 Till I attaine the long'd-for myserie  
     Of seeing your face.

Beholding one in three, and three in one,  
 A Trinitie, to shine in Unitie; [One alone(?)]  
 The gladdest light, darke man can thinke upon;  
     O grant it me!

Father, and Sonne, and Holy Ghost, you three  
 All coeternall in your Majestie,  
 Distinct in persons, yet in Unitie  
 One God to see.

My Maker, Saviour, and my Sanctifier.  
 To heare, to meditate, sweeten my desire,  
 With grace, with love, with cherishing intire,  
 O, then how blest;  
 Among thy Saints elected to abide,  
 And with thy Angels, placed side, by side,  
 But in thy presence, truly glorified  
 Shall I there rest?

This poem reverses the stress of "To Heaven": the penitence proper is covered in the first and second stanzas, and the divine love-longing is the subject of the remainder of the poem. "The Sinners Sacrifice," although it follows the popular religious lyrics in its liturgical echoes, really fuses scholasticism and mysticism as the metaphysical poets did. Part of it will be discussed along with the more complicated theology of the second group of religious poems.

"A Hymne to God the Father" is simpler, more bare and direct; it is definitely in the popular tradition rather than the theological tradition:

#### A HYMNE TO GOD THE FATHER

Heare mee, O God!  
 A broken heart  
 Is my best part:  
 Use still thy rod,  
 That I may prove  
 Therein, thy Love.

If thou hadst not  
 Beene sterne to mee,  
 But left me free,  
 I had forgot  
 My selfe and thee.

For, sin's so sweet  
 As minds ill bent  
 Rarely repent,  
 Untill they meet  
 Their punishment.

Who more can crave  
 Then thou hast done:  
 That gav'st a Sonne,  
 To free a slave?  
 First made of nought;  
 Withall since bought.

Sinne, Death, and Hell,  
 His glorious Name  
 Quite overcame,  
 Yet I rebell,  
 And slight the same.

But, I'll come in,  
 Before my losse,  
 Me farther tosse,  
 As sure to win  
 Under his Crosse.

Jonson did not ever recapture ancient Rome with more complete consistency than he captured medieval religion in this poem; and yet it is probable that this is one of the least archeological of his works. Perhaps better than lengthy discussions a few examples of religious lyrics of medieval England will show the spirit which binds this poem to its native forerunners.

"A Form of Confession," from "How to Hear Mass," in the Vernon Manuscript, is printed as a separate penitential lyric in Patterson's collection. (I have substituted *u's* for *v's* and written out *th's* and *gh's*.)

I was un-kynde,  
 And was thenne blynde,  
 To worche ageynes his wille,  
 That furst me wrought,  
 And seththe me bought,  
 Fro peynes he was put to ille;  
 There-fore we pray  
 To the to-day,  
 That knowes bothe good and ille,  
 Graunt us lyve,  
 We may us schrive,  
 Ur penaunce to folfile.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Patterson, *Middle English Penitential Lyrics*, p. 47.

Number 145 of Carleton Brown's *Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century* is not quite so close to Jonson's "Hymn"; but kinship is noticeable.

God, that madist al thing of nought  
 And with thi precious blood us bought,  
     Mercy, helpe and grace!  
 As thou art verry god and man,  
 And of thi syde thi blood ran,  
     Forgive us our trespase.

Number 35 in the same editor's *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century* is also somewhat similar. But none of the earlier poems that I have examined could be called a source by any stretching of the term: although Jonson must have read and heard many of the earlier religious lyrics, his own are products of his own genius. His metrical skill does not confine itself to the precise imitation of the earlier models. Although I have not made a systematic or thorough examination of medieval religious lyrics, I have examined a large number of them and have found none in the form Jonson used for his "Hymn." At first glance, or even at first hearing, his stanzas seem to be identical with the frequently used *abbacc* of the medieval lyrics, but actually there are two stanza forms repeated in a regular pattern: *ABB, ABB*, the *A* stanzas rhyming *abbacc*, and the *B* stanzas rhyming *abbab*. The division of thought follows the division of the stanzas, the first three dealing primarily with the state of mind of the penitent and his desire for punishment, the latter three dealing with the goodness of God and the grateful determination to lead a new life.

"A Hymne on the Nativitie of My Savior" is written throughout in the simplest and most frequently used of the hymn forms (if we except the plain quatrain), *aabccb*:

I sing the birth, was borne to night,  
 The Author both of Life, and light;  
     The Angels so did sound it,  
 And like the ravish'd Sheep'erds said,  
 Who saw the light, and were afraid,  
     Yet search'd, and true they found it.

The Sonne of God, th' Eternall King,  
 That did us all salvation bring,  
     And freed the soule from danger;

## HUMBLE GLEANINGS IN DIVINITIE

Hee whom the whole world could not take,  
 The Word, which heaven, and earth did make;  
     Was now laid in a Manger.

The Fathers wisdom will'd it so,  
 The Sonnes obedience knew no No,  
     Both wills were in one stature;  
 And as that wisdom had decreed,  
 The Word was now made Flesh indeed,  
     And tooke on him our Nature.

What comfort by him doe wee winne?  
 Who made himselfe the price of sinne,  
     To make us heires of glory?  
 To see this Babe, all innocence;  
 A Martyr borne in our defence;  
     Can man forget this Storie?

Perhaps it seems strange to a modern reader to find hints of the future martyrdom of Christ in a poem on the Nativity; but this was the custom rather than the exception in early religious poetry. Jonson touches the martyrdom more lightly than the fifteenth-century carol writers (and, with one exception, Carleton Brown dates all carols from the fifteenth century or later). There are twelve songs of the Nativity in *Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century*; naturally, almost all of them refer to the child as the Redeemer; five of them specify that the redemption is to be made by His death, and three specify death on the cross. Hence the songs are not merely Christmas hymns of joy and festivity.

Jonson's short religious poems are well-nigh flawless in technique, and surely they illustrate no such lack of taste as Sir Walter Scott and Swinburne deplored. It may be entirely just to say with Herford that "The Sinners Sacrifice" lacks "the searching individual accent" of "To Heaven" or that "he reproduces the current theology in the current phrases, or phrases which only depart from current usage to become pedantic."<sup>11</sup> It may be entirely just to apply to the whole body of the religious verse the dictum applied to "The Elegy on My Muse": "His conceptions of the celestial life do not differ from those of the simplest devotee . . ."<sup>12</sup> These limitations, except for the doubtful term "pedantic," are not necessarily to be construed as weak-

<sup>11</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 392.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 383.

nesses. Indeed, one modern school of criticism finds fault with the writer who does not speak for his own people, even if they are "humble devotees"; one critic of the school states frankly that Thomas Wolfe was a failure because he repudiated his own people. R. S. Walker considered the "Hymne to God the Father" one of Jonson's successful lyrics, which lyrics in his opinion owe their success to acceptance of traditions already thoroughly established. Most of Jonson's failures he blamed on his experiments. The "current theology" of which Herford spoke was centuries old, and it was a theology that had produced and sustained great poets. It was also giving inspiration to a new group of religious poets, whose poetry had roots deep in the past and was destined to a glorious future.

Metaphysical poetry has received so much attention in recent years that it is difficult to present its distinctive features in a paragraph or two; but a summary is necessary, however inadequate it may be. Samuel Johnson, who originated the term, said of the metaphysicals:

Their wish was only to say what they hoped had never been said before. . . . This kind of writing . . . had been recommended by the example of Donne, a man of very extensive and various knowledge; and by Jonson, whose manner resembled that of Donne more in the ruggedness of his lines than in the cast of his sentiments.<sup>13</sup>

Helen C. White is much less derogatory. She finds *moderation* "in the sense of respect for reason and measure," and *intellectual emphasis*, "an emphasis apparent both in the preoccupation of the poet and in his procedure," the essential qualities of these poets.<sup>14</sup> One sees immediately that this definition is too capacious and needs further limiting, since if these qualities were the sole criteria, Jonson would be the most outstanding and most typical of the metaphysical poets. Perhaps the best means of limitation is example: Helen C. White treats five poets, adding Herbert to the four treated by her predecessor, J. B. Leishman, whose poets were Donne, Crashaw, Vaughan, and Traherne. Notice that Chapman, of whom Douglas Bush says, "He is taking rank as a metaphysical poet of the first importance,"<sup>15</sup> and Cowley, who is largely responsible for Samuel John-

<sup>13</sup> Johnson, Samuel, *Life of Cowley*. See also White, *The Metaphysical Poets*, p. 71.

<sup>14</sup> White, *The Metaphysical Poets*, p. 53.

<sup>15</sup> Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition*, p. 199.

son's application of the term "metaphysical," are both absent. Of Donne's poetry she takes only the "Divine Poetry." Hence we may safely add that in her interpretation metaphysical poetry is predominantly, if not entirely, religious.

Carleton Brown traces the origin of metaphysical poetry to the theological lyrics, "sophisticated in tone . . . characterized by verbal conceits and clever paradox."<sup>16</sup> Helen C. White, however, emphasizes more strongly the mystical personal experience of the writers. The two together indicate that the metaphysical school is more a synthesis of the scholastic and mystic outlooks than a definite descendant of either school.

Without attempting to prove that Jonson was one of the metaphysical poets, I do wish to show that some of his poetry had many qualities in common with theirs, and that the later members of the school may have owed more than a ~~mate~~ "ruggedness" to his influence.

The most ambitious of Jonson's religious nondramatic works is the group of poems entitled "Eupheme; or, The Faire Fame Left to Posteritie of That Truly-Noble Lady, the Lady Venetia Digby," and so forth. According to the title "Eupheme" comprised "Ten Pieces": "The Dedication of Her Cradle"; "The Song of Her Descent"; "The Picture of Her Body"; "Her Mind"; "Her Being Chosen a Muse"; "Her Faire Offices"; "Her Happie Match"; "Her Hopefull Issue"; "Her Apotheosis, or, Relation to the Saints"; "Her Inscription, or Crowne."

A large part of this ambitious scheme is missing, and there is no "Execration" to explain the losses. There are three gaps: "The Song of her Descent" is incomplete; "Her Mind" is followed by a note:

A whole quaternion in the midst of this Poem is lost, containing entirely the three next pieces of it, and all of the fourth (which in the order of the whole, is the eighth) excepting the very end: which at the top of the next quaternion goeth on thus . . .

And finally, "The Tenth, being her Inscription, or Crowne, is lost." Once again, as in the Vulcanian ravages, the most personal piece is lost; the poem on "Her Being chosen a Muse" would have added a pleasant and not too heavy note to the poet's verse autobiography,

<sup>16</sup> Brown, *Religious Poetry of the Fifteenth Century*, p. xxv.



although a less important one than the "Journey into Scotland."

Of the extant poems and fragments three are related to religious poetry, if they are not exactly religious poems. The "Apotheosis," or "Elegy on My Muse," which could swallow up all of the "Ten lyric Pieces" addressed to Charis, has been praised and damned. Swinburne considered it a ridiculous attempt to whitewash the reputation of the "demi-mondaine, who made a comparatively respectable end as Lady Digby," Venetia Stanley. Herford praised it:

The closing "Elegy on my Muse" is, in spite of inequalities of style and anomalies of metre, not unworthy to be, what it probably was, Jonson's last considerable piece of verse. Rarely had he touched so simply the note of desolate loss as in the opening verses.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, as I have already quoted, he considered the theology of the poem naïve and conventional.

In 1629, four years before the death of Venetia Digby, Ben contributed a commendatory poem to Sir John Beaumont's *Bosworth-field*. This poem concludes with the lines:

•And like a hallow'd Temple, free from taint  
Of Ethnicisme, makes his Muse a Saint.<sup>18</sup>

This conceit must have been recalled by Ben when Venetia, whom he had playfully called his "muse" in a poem addressed to her, died. The "Apotheosis" is Jonson's attempt to make his muse a saint; but it is ambitious and serious, not a playful work.

Both "Eupheme" and the "Apotheosis," most important of the ten lyrics, have Latin mottoes, properties usually reserved by Jonson for plays or whole collections of verse. Neither of these mottoes, so far as I know, has been identified before. The motto to "Eupheme" is: "Vivam amare voluptas, defunctam Religio. Stat." Kathryn Anderson McEuen points out certain elements of the Statian *epicedia*<sup>19</sup> in the "Elegie on My Muse" (the "Apotheosis"). The elements most prominent in Jonson's poem are the *laudatio* and the *consolatio*; also in keeping with the *epicedion*, according to Mrs. McEuen, are the doubt of divine justice (which is very doubtfully present in Jonson's poem) and "the promise which Jonson makes to Sir Kenelm

<sup>17</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 383.

<sup>18</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, p. 269.

<sup>19</sup> McEuen, *Classical Influence on the Tribe of Ben*, p. 166.

that he will be reunited with his wife in after-life." As further evidence that Jonson had Statius in mind, she mentions in a note that the motto is from Statius, although she does not identify it.<sup>20</sup> However, she feels that on the whole the poem is so clearly Christianized that it is among the least classical of Jonson's works.

Identification of the two Latin mottoes, however, shows still closer relations between the "Apotheosis" and one of the *epicedia* of Statius. The first motto is a slightly inaccurate quotation of a sentence from the prose dedication to Book V of the *Silvae* by Statius: <sup>21</sup> "Uxorem enim vivam amare voluptas est, defunctam religio." Statius's book is dedicated to Abascantus, whose wife, Priscilla, is the subject of the long *epicede* which is the first poem in the book. The motto of Jonson's elegy is the sixteenth line of the "Epicedion in Priscillam": "Sera quidem tanto struitur medicina dolori." This line may give a hint as to the date of Jonson's poem. The Lady Venetia died in 1633, Ben in 1637; so the date of composition is limited to a period of four years. Statius's apology for allowing a full year to elapse after the death of Priscilla is tempered by his excuse that he did not wish to write while the sorrow was fresh and the wounds of grief were raw. Possibly Jonson's elegy was written in 1634-35, although of course "late" does not necessarily mean after the lapse of a year in Jonson's poem as it does in Statius.

Jonson concluded the "Apotheosis" with a Latin dedication to Digby, beginning: "In pietatis memoriam quam praestas Venetiae tuae . . ." The second sentence in Statius's dedication of his book to Abascantus reads: "Pietas quam Priscillae tuae praestas . . ." The two quotations and the Latin paraphrase are definite indications that Jonson wished to draw parallels between Priscilla and Venetia, and Abascantus and Digby. Both of the latter pair were promising young men in favor with their rulers.

Lest we think that Jonson is drawing too heavily on the "ethnisme" which he dismisses in the poem to Beaumont, let us remember that Dante met Statius in Purgatory, not in Limbo, and met him just after he had reached the state of blessedness and was about to ascend into Paradise. Statius was believed to be secretly a Christian,

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282. .

<sup>21</sup> Statius, *Status with an English Translation* by J. H. Mozley, I, 266 ff.

not merely a superior pagan like Cato, who also escaped Limbo by a poetic dispensation.<sup>22</sup>

There is certainly little in the poem itself which draws on the classics. The opening lines, so much admired by Herford, contain the only mythological reference in the more than two hundred lines of the poem, with the possible exception of the reference to the Phoenix, which I shall discuss in detail later.

'Twere time that I dy'd too, now shee is dead,  
Who was my Muse, and life of all I sey'd.<sup>23</sup>  
The Spirit that I wrote with, and conceiv'd,  
All that was good, or great in me she weav'd,  
And set it forth; the rest were Cobwebs fine,  
Spun out in name of some of the old Nine!  
To hang a window, or make darke the roome,  
Till swept away, th'were cancell'd with a broome!

Although I have made no effort to count or tabulate images, any reader of Jonson's works must notice the fondness for figures drawn from small creatures, insects, spiders, and so forth—a fondness which he shares with Donne. Donne, however, uses his most memorable spider as a figure for love; Jonson here uses the spider as a figure for the poet, spinning his fine cobwebs under the eyes of the nine muses. The former use is far more typical of the violent images usually associated with the poetry of the metaphysical school.

After rebuking Nature for losing a rarity equal with the Phoenix, the poet bursts into a frenzy of grief until he is recalled to himself much as Herbert is in "The Collar":

Sure, I am dead, and know it not! I feele  
Nothing I doe; but, like a heavie wheele,  
Am turned with an others powers. My Passion  
Whoorles me about, and to blaspheme in fashion!  
I murmure against God, for having ta'en  
Her blessed Soule, hence, forth this valley vane  
Of teares, and dungeon of calamitie!  
I envie it the Angels amitie!

<sup>22</sup> *Purg.*, XXI, 91: Statius; *Purg.*, I and II: Cato.

<sup>23</sup> Some of the Folios may read "dy'd" instead of "sey'd," since that is the reading in Newdigate's edition; Gifford's text reads "did." The Oxford editors, however, quote the opening couplet with "sey'd," and the three copies of the Folio which I have consulted read "sey'd," which is probably for "essayed."

The joy of Saints! the Crowne for which it lives,  
 The glorie, and gaine of rest, which the place gives!  
 Dare I, prophane, so irreligious bee  
 To greet, or grieve her soft Euthanasee!  
 So sweetly taken to the Court of blisse,  
 As spirits had stolne her Spirit, in a kisse,  
 From off her pillow, and deluded oed;  
 And left her lovely body unthought dead!

The "unthought dead" is immediately echoed with "Indeed, she is not dead!" since, of course, her soul and body will be rejoined on the Day of Judgment.

The remainder of the poem is almost entirely taken up with "humble gleanings" from the fathers and scholastics. From this point on in the discussion I propose to use the "Apotheosis" as a *summa* and to enlarge and illustrate the theology by references to other poems.

The first of the purely scholastic references is labeled:

For, as there are three Natures, Schoolemen call  
 One corporall, only; th' other spirituall,  
 Like single; so, there is a third, commixt,  
 Of Body and Spirit together, plac'd betwixt  
 Those other two; which must be judg'd, or crown'd . . .

The "corporeal nature" is, of course, the beast; the spiritual, the angel; the "commixt" is explained by St. Thomas Aquinas: "Having treated of the spiritual and the corporeal creature, we now proceed to treat of man, who is composed of a spiritual and a corporeal substance."<sup>24</sup> Maurice de Wulf explains this doctrine:

On account of the spirituality of his soul, man occupies a central position in the universe. He is a spirit, but one destined to display its life in a body. He is midway between merely corporeal things and pure spirits. He is, to use a comparison dear to the Middle Ages, a *microcosm*, for all the perfections of reality as a whole meet in him in a wonderful alloy.<sup>25</sup>

The merely corporeal, however important it may be in the complete works of Ben Jonson, is absent in his religious poetry. His reference to the "dreadful day" takes small cognizance of the damned:

<sup>24</sup> "The *Summa Theologica*" of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part I, Vol. III, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> De Wulf, *Medieval Philosophy*, p. 89.

O Day of joy, and suretie to the just!  
 Who in that feast of Resurrection trust!  
 That great eternall Holy-day of rest,  
 To Body, and Soule! where *Love* is all the guest!  
 And the whole Banquet is full sight of God!  
 Of joy the Circle, and sole Period!  
 All other gladnesse, with the thought is barr'd;  
 Hope, hath her end! and Faith hath her reward!

Since this is the theme on which the *Divine Comedy* is built, it is not so unfamiliar as other Scholastic doctrines. Dante along with the angels and blessed souls was given a glimpse of beatitude at the end of the *Paradise*. De Wulf says of the sight of God:

To behold God, whether in His works, or face to face, is more essential to happiness than love itself, according to Thomas Aquinas, for love is after all a necessary consequence of such a vision. Surely no philosophy could give to knowledge a higher or more magnificent role than this.<sup>26</sup>

Jonson, like Aquinas, like Dante, has barred all other gladness, since no other gladness is needed or is possible.

"The universe of the Schoolmen," says de Wulf, "is hierarchically arranged or graded."<sup>27</sup> Even within the large hierarchy are smaller hierarchies, most important, perhaps, the orders of the angels. They, of course, are the purely spiritual substances. After Venetia Digby's death she is placed:

Amongst her Peeres, those Princes of all good!  
 Saints, Martyrs, Prophets, with those Hierarchies,  
 Angels, Arch-angels, Principalities,  
 The Dominations, Vertues, and the Powers,  
 The Thrones, the Cherube, and Seraphick bowers,  
 That, planted round, there sing before the Lamb.  
 A new Song to his praise, and great I Am.

Nowadays the science of angelology is something less than common knowledge; so a brief summary will not be altogether amiss. De Wulf, again, furnishes a brief introduction:

These latter—superior intelligences, free from the imperfections of corporeal life—form an intermediate step between God and man in the hierarchy of essences. Indeed it may be said that scholasticism has con-

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

structed, upon the purest principles of intellectual and volitional activity, a psychology, or rather an "eidology" of angels, which has nothing in common with Aristotle's vague conjectures on the intelligences that moved the spheres.<sup>28</sup>

Although there is Scriptural authority for the names of the orders of angels, Dionysius the Areopagite is responsible for the arrangement into "trinall triplicities." St. Thomas Aquinas gives the orders according to Dionysius and records the variations made by Gregory:

The grades of the angelic orders are assigned by Gregory and Dionysius, who agree as regards all except the *principalities* and *virtues* . . . Gregory . . . places *principalities* between the *dominations* and the *powers*; and the *virtues* between the *powers* and the *archangels*.<sup>29</sup>

Dante repudiates Gregory and supports Dionysius;<sup>30</sup> Jonson also follows Dionysius, arranging and grouping the three hierarchies according to the latter, though for the sake of meter and rhyme he lists the second hierarchy from top to bottom instead of from bottom to top as he lists the other two.

Jonson was by no means the first English poet to use the angelic hierarchies as material for poetry. *Piers Plowman* adds a tenth order composed of Lucifer and his followers, whose place was to be taken by man.<sup>31</sup> Lydgate, particularly in "Letabundus," follows the conventional treatment; so does Heyward in *The Hierarchie of Blessed Angels*. Spenser, in "An Hymne of Heavenly Love," and Donne, in the "Elegie on Mistris Boulstred," though they do not give detailed treatment, apparently follow the orthodox system. However, Spenser, in "An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie," divides his angel groups into pairs. Perhaps the militant Protestantism of Spenser and Milton may have led in some degree to their abandonment of the more orthodox angelology.

The angels in "Eupheme" and in the immediately preceding "Elegie on the Lady Jane ("Anne" in the Folio title, but not in the poem itself) Pawlet" are used to set off the divinity and blessedness of the dead ladies. The latter, like Lady Venetia:

<sup>28</sup> De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, p. 103.

<sup>29</sup> "The Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas, Pt. I, Vol. III, p. 440.

<sup>30</sup> *Par.*, Canto xxviii.

<sup>31</sup> Langland, *The Vision of Will concerning Piers the Plowman*, ed. by Skeat, p. 109.

Speakes Heavens Language! and discovereth free  
 To every Order, ev'ry Hierarchie!  
 Beholds her Maker! and, in him, doth see  
 What the beginnings of all beauties be;  
 And all beatitudes, that thence doe flow:  
 Which they that have the Crowne are sure to know!

Since St. Thomas says, "The soul and an angel are not of the same species,"<sup>32</sup> there must be some definite reasons for the elevation of the ladies to their state of beatitude "equall with Angells." The Lady Jane is depicted almost as one of the virgin martyrs in the Golden Legend, except that instead of pagan tormentors and executioners, Ben calls in the doctors:

. . . when they urg'd the Cure  
 Of her disease, how did her soule assure  
 Her sufferings, as the body had beene away!  
 Stick on your Cupping-glasses, feare not, put  
 Your hottest Causticks to, burne, lance, or cut:  
 'Tis but a body which you can torment,  
 And I, into the world, all Soule, was sent!

She seems to have gloried in her sickness and suffering as much as Lydgate's St. Petronylla, whose "maladye was to hir a gladnesse."<sup>33</sup> Lady Venetia, too,

. . . spent more time in teares her selfe to dresse  
 For her devotions, and those sad essayes  
 Of sorrow, then all pompe of gaudy daies:  
 And came forth ever cheered, with the rod  
 Of divine Comfort, when sh' had talk'd with *God*.  
 Her broken sighes did never misse whole sense:  
 Nor can the bruised heart want eloquence:  
 For, Prayer is the Incense most perfumes  
 The holy Altars, when it least presumes.

Lady Venetia's bruised heart is, perhaps, no more fashionable now than Lady Jane's suffering; but it is more in keeping with metaphysical poetry, particularly when it is joined with prayer. The image of prayer as incense was almost certainly suggested by the prayers of the elders in Revelation. Something of the same image was used

<sup>32</sup> "*The Summa Theologica*" of St. Thomas Aquinas, Pt. I, Vol. III, p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> Lydgate, *The Minor Poems*, p. 156.

in "The Sinners Sacrifice," in which a broken heart is said to be a more acceptable sacrifice than the fat of rams or bulls, and a contrite heart sweeter than any other odor. George Herbert, in "The Altar," uses a similar image:

A Broken Altar, Lord, thy servant reares,  
Made of a heart, and cemented with teares . . .  
O let thy blessed Sacrifice be mine,  
And sanctifie this Altar to be thine.

The "sure Election, and predestin'd grace," the charity, the faith, the good life of the Lady Venetia are sound theology, but as poetry there are other passages more noteworthy. The description of Heaven is such a passage:

There shall the Brother, with the Sister walke,  
And Sons, and Daughters, with their Parents talke;  
But all of God; They still shall have to say,  
But make him All in All, their Theme, that Day:  
That happy Day, that never shall see night!  
Where Hee will be, all Beautie to the Sight;  
Wine, or delicious fruits, unto the Taste;  
A Musique in the Eares, will ever last;  
Unto the Sent, a Spicerie, or Balme;  
And to the Touch, a Flower, like soft as Palme.

The beauty, spice, and balm of Paradise were carried over into the nest of the phoenix, which became an important and varied symbol in medieval theology. In the *Physiologus* the phoenix signified Christ. C. G. Osgood, in his edition of *The Pearl*, points out other uses of the symbol:

The phoenix was a not uncommon medieval symbol for the birth of Christ, and of the resurrection of Christ and of man. More rarely, in reference to the incarnation Mary was called phoenix. . . . More rarely still is the phoenix a type of her singular beauty and sweetness, as here.<sup>34</sup>

He cites lines 429-32 of *The Pearl*, and lines 981-84 of Chaucer's *Boke of the Duchesse*.

In the early lines of the "Apotheosis" Jonson compared in their rarity the phoenix and Lady Venetia; in the fourth poem of "Eupheme," "Her Mind," he swept beyond mere comparisons and the

<sup>34</sup> *The Pearl*, ed. by Osgood, pp. 71-72.



assignment of worldly virtues, drawing on various symbols of divinity. The poet first dismisses the painter of the body:

Not, that your Art I doe refuse:  
But here I may no colours use.  
Beside, your hand will never hit,  
To draw a thing that cannot sit.

You could make shift to paint an Eye,  
An Eagle trowing in the skye,  
The Sunne, a Sea, or soundless Pit;  
But these are like a Mind, not it.

No, to expresse Mind to sense,  
Would ask a Heavens Intelligenee [*sic*];  
Since nothing can report that flame,  
But what's of kinne to whence it came.

The divine origin of her mind is emphasized:

A Mind so pure, so perfect fine,  
As 'tis not radiant, but divine:  
And so disdaining any tryer;  
'Tis got where it can try the fire.

There, high exalted in the Spheare,  
As it another Nature were,  
It moveth all; and makes a flight  
As circular, as infinite.

This last stanza alone would prove the divinity of her mind, since the Scholastics believed the circular motion of the heavens the most perfect of all motions, having "neither beginning, middle, nor end . . . complete within itself, without further addition."<sup>35</sup>

The remainder of the poem attempts to explain why such a visitor should choose this earth. Is it missionary spirit that has made it come to help us?

Is it because it sees us dull,  
And stuck in clay here, it would pull  
Us forth, by some Celestiall slight  
Up to her owne sublimed hight?

Or hath she here, upon the ground,  
Some Paradise, or Palace found

<sup>35</sup> De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 120-21.

## HUMBLE GLEANINGS IN DIVINITIE

In all the bounds of beautie fit  
For her t'inhabit? There is it.

Thrice happy house, that hast receipt  
For this so loftie forme, so streight,  
So polisht, perfect, round, and even,  
As it slid moulded off from Heaven.

Not swelling like the Ocean proud,  
But stooping gently, as a Cloud,  
As smooth as Oyle pour'd forth, and calme  
As showers; and sweet as drops of Balme.

Smooth, soft, and sweet, in all a floud  
Where it may run to any good;  
And where it staves, it there becomes  
A nest of odorous spice, and gummies.

In action, winged as the wind,  
In rest, like spirits left behind  
Upon a banke, or field of flowers,  
Begotten by that wind, and showers.

In thee, faire Mansion, let it rest,  
Yet know, with what thou art possest,  
Thou entertaining in thy brest,  
But such a Mind, mak'st God thy Guest.

These passages contain overtones of theology just as surely as some of the passages in the second chapter contain overtones of mythology. The "faire Mansion" is the body of Lady Venetia and is an earthly Paradise in which the phoenix, her soul, finds a fitting habitation. To make this interpretation almost inevitable, a poem, "Diphthera Jovis," assigned to Jonson in MS *Harl.* 4955 (which contains numerous other works by Jonson, including "Eupheme," 3 and 4, and the "Execration") and printed by Newdigate has the same imagery more definitely expressed:

All Circles had their spring and end  
In her! and what could perfect bee,  
Or without angles, it was shee! . . .  
Her soule possest her fleshes state  
In faire freehould, not an Inmate:  
And when the flesh, here, shut up day,  
Fames heate upon the grave did stay;

And howrely brooding ore the same,  
 Keeps warm the spice of her good name,  
 Untill the dust returned bee  
 Into a Phoenix, which is shee.<sup>36</sup>

The phoenix is an example of a myth made into a Christian symbol; the Old Testament also furnished Christian symbols. "Jacob's ladder" became identified with the ladder of Boethius that led from the active life to the contemplative life; this ladder of contemplation appears in Dante's *Paradise*. The introductory poem in "Eupheme" ("The Dedication of Her Cradle") uses this symbol:

But, here's a Song of her descent;  
 And Call to the high Parliament  
 Of Heaven; where Seraphim take tent  
 Of ord'ring all.

This. . . .  
 Is sung: as als' her getting up  
 By Jacobs Ladder, to the top  
 Of that eternall Port kept ope'  
 For such as shee.

In considering "Eupheme" I have taken the theological material to show that Jonson made it one of the raw materials for his poetry; I have chosen the passages not so much for their poetic beauty as for their substance; but there is surely enough poetry in the passages quoted to justify some comparison between Jonson and the metaphysicals. Herford devoted several pages to a comparison and contrast of Jonson and Donne, using the latter "to measure both Jonson's inferiority in absolute poetry, and also the immense impression which it made on his own time, and the lessened but secure impression which it has made on critics since." He spoke of Donne's "fiery and daring intellect" which "created marvels of strange and original song, where a tormented yet haunting music issues from the clash of contending, or the onrush of evolving thought." Jonson's mind he characterizes as "more massive and coherent, if less nervous and high-strung." There is little to quarrel with in this contrast or in the subsequent emphasis in kinship; but in a still later passage it seems to me that he does Jonson something of an injustice:

<sup>36</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, pp. 289-90.

Donne's metaphysical wit haunts the crumbling but still imposing edifice of medieval scholasticism and the vast shadowy profiles of the new science. Jonson's wit, whatever its "overplus," was not "metaphysical" in any sense; but it commanded with secure mastery the whole field of classical learning, and had all the impetus and ardour of the Renaissance on its side.<sup>87</sup>

We have seen that on several occasions at least Jonson's wit visited the "crumbling but still imposing edifice," and he was definitely interested in the new science. Like the metaphysicals he combined the strains of medieval religious verse, both theological and mystical. And a reader of Donne's "Anniversaries" and "Epicedes and Obsequies" may well feel that Jonson drew on his contemporary as well as on the native traditions to which the poetry of both belongs.

I shall conclude this chapter with a type of religious poetry less like that of Donne than the "Poems of Devotion" in "Under-wood," "To Heaven," and "Eupheme." Newdigate thus explains his inclusion in "Drift-wood" of two poems to the Virgin Mary:

These verses and "The Reverse" which follow them in Stafford's *The Femall Glory* are signed "B.I." If they are Jonson's, they may have been written under the influence of the queen or of Catholic friends, like the Digbys. . . . The two poems seem to be the interpretation of some emblematic picture of the Holy Child and his Mother, crowned with a garland.<sup>88</sup>

The first of the poems, "The Ghyrlond of the Blessed Virgin Marie," is an acrostic, a "five-fold mysterie," each of the five letters in "Marie" being used as the initial of a flower: Myrtle, Almond, Rose, Ivy, and Eglantine, each typifying some virtue of Mary. The Eglantine brings in another Old Testament symbol, the burning bush, applied in the Middle Ages to Mary:

But, that which summes all, is the Eglantine,  
Which, of the field is clep'd the sweetest brier,  
Inflam'd with ardor to that mystick Shine,  
In Moses bush, un-wasted in the fire.

Thus, Love, and Hope, and burning Charitie,  
(Divinest graces) are so entermixt,

<sup>87</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 411.

<sup>88</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, pp. 367-68.

With od'rous sweets, and soft humilitie,  
As if they'ador'd the Head, whereon th'are fixt.<sup>39</sup>

The second of these pieces addresses the Virgin:

Daughter, and Mother, and the Spouse of God,  
Alike of kin, to that most blessed Trine,  
Of Persons, yet in Union (One) divine.  
How are thy gifts, and graces blaz'd abroad! <sup>40</sup>

Then follow five stanzas of epithets for the Virgin in the manner of numerous poems of the fifteenth century. Lydgate's "Ave, Jesse Virgula!" is perhaps the supreme example of such piling up of epithets; but the thirty-eight poems to the Virgin in Carleton Brown's *Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century* and the twenty or so pieces that Lydgate wrote to her furnish many examples.

The date of publication of these verses (1635) places them at about the same time as the composition of "Eupheme," and possibly, though their date is uncertain, the composition of the "Poems of Devotion." In subject matter and style "The Ghyrlond" and "The Reverse" are not greatly dissimilar to the other religious pieces, and being printed under Jonson's initials before his death there is certainly every reason to consider them his compositions.

"An Epigram to the Queene, Then Lying In" (1630) paraphrases the "Ave, Maria":

Haile Mary, full of grace, it once was said,  
And by an Angell, to the blessed'st Maid  
The Mother of our Lord: why may not I  
(Without prophanenesse) yet, a Poët, cry  
Haile, Mary, full of honours, to my Queene,  
The Mother of our Prince?

In view of the following chapter I should like to point out here that, except for those religious poems in which Ben himself speaks as a penitent, all, or nearly all, the religious pieces are addressed to women or are in elegies praising dead women or girls. The most genuinely tender and probably best known of these poems is the brief epigram "On My First Daughter":

Here lies to each her parents ruth,  
Mary, the daughter of their youth:

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

Yet, all heavens gifts, being heavens due,  
 It makes the father, lesse, to rue.  
 At sixe months end, she parted hence  
 With safety of her innocence;  
 Whose soule heavens Queene, (whose name she beares)  
 In comfort of her mothers teares,  
 Hath plac'd amongst her Virgin-traine:  
 Where, while that sever'd doth remaine,  
 This grave partakes the fleshly birth.  
 Which cover lightly, gentle earth.

Herford pointed out the final couplet's indebtedness to Martial's "Erotion,"<sup>41</sup> but stressed the difference between both the poets and the subjects. Actually Ben's tiny daughter is far more closely akin to the English Pearl than to the Latin Erotion: like the Pearl she died in very young childhood, and also like her became a member of the Virgin's train of "one hundred forty and four thousand virgins."<sup>42</sup> Of course, there is no ground for suggesting that Ben ever saw *The Pearl*, much less read it, but the epigram shows again the poet's practice of fusing different traditions without violating either.

In "Poems of Devotion" he drew largely, if not entirely, on the popular religious tradition as it still lives in the hymns. In "To Heaven" he personalized very much the same tradition, giving a powerful effect of autobiography without departing from the normal conventions of the penitential lyric. Of course, even these poems were affected to some extent by the more highly literary theological poetry, but by no means so deeply affected as the various elegies which drew on the gleanings from the schoolmen. Also, in the least pagan of his works he was capable of absorbing and using classical material without allowing it to destroy the religious element of his poetry.

In his religious poetry proper Ben devoted his talents to penitence, faith, love, and beatitude. The more brutal side of medieval dramatic or epic poetry, punishment of the damned, did not enter his religious poems. However, in many of his secular satires he treated the same kind of individuals that Dante's *Inferno* and innumerable early ser-

<sup>41</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 380.

<sup>42</sup> *The Pearl*, ed. by Osgood, pp. 34, 37, 85.

mons contained. And although the gap seems wide between the saintly women of some of the elegies and the Court Pucelle and her sisters, both types played an important part in the religion of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

## CHAPTER IV

# *Troth, Put Out Woman Too!*

DURING the Middle Ages and the Renaissance two violently contrasting views of womanhood existed side by side: one, the chivalric idealization, was, according to C. S. Lewis, due almost exclusively to the conventions of courtly love.<sup>1</sup> Carleton Brown calls attention to several songs to the Virgin in which "the language parallels the phrases of the courtly song so closely that one must read the text carefully to be certain that the devotion expressed is directed toward the Virgin."<sup>2</sup> Robin Hood's gentleness toward all women is the outward expression of his devotion to the Virgin. Whether courtly love or the cult of the Virgin was more important in the idealization of womankind is of small consequence in a study of the contrast of attitudes toward woman. This is especially true since there was obvious interrelation between sacred and secular love poetry.

The form of idealization most powerful in Jonson's time was probably the secular type, which blossomed as Petrarchism. Almost all Elizabethan poets paid homage to the sonnet conventions of Petrarch and his idealized lady. Lisle John names three important exceptions who did not write sonnet sequences: Jonson, Donne, and Habington.<sup>3</sup>

Opposed to idealization and woman worship is a bitter misogyny, which may have been in part an inheritance from Roman satirists, notably Juvenal, but probably owes its authority chiefly to St. Paul, St. Augustine, and the medieval church. The hostility of the church to pleasure, particularly sexual pleasure, is discussed in Lewis's chapter on "Courtly Love"; but for full appreciation of the vitality of woman-hating we must turn to the medieval pulpit:

To the vast mass of the middle and lower orders, for whom no romantic minstrelsy had provided a chivalrous ideal, the pulpit, their oracle of refinement and learning, presented a picture of womanhood, ill-balanced, indeed, but sufficiently realistic and lively to appeal to the lay mind. Thus

<sup>1</sup> Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, chap. i, "Courtly Love."

<sup>2</sup> Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, p. xxi.

<sup>3</sup> John, *The Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences*, p. 3.



early there grew up in popular verse a traditional satire, half-comic, half-tragic, from which neither the greatest of medieval English poets nor the greatest of all our dramatists could escape in their day, and one that commonly persists through the literature of following centuries to that of modern times.<sup>4</sup>

Bromyard, one of the medieval preachers frequently quoted by Owst, found an important sin in our mother Eve to be babbling when she should have held her peace; in the usual contrast, "our lady seynt Mary did on an othere wyse."<sup>5</sup> But most of the preachers and the satiric poets who followed them emphasized two other sins, vanity and lust. Five of the seven deadly sins in *Piers Plowman* are masculine, two feminine; the latter are Pride and Lechery.

Picturesque figures of speech aided the preachers in their assaults on the two prime feminine sins; for example, the woman rolling her beauty in lust was compared to a sow rolling her nostrils in filth; overdressed women were compared to pack-horses adorned to be sold. Owst remarks that figures of speech such as these found their way into satiric poetry, which borrowed also the ideas of the preachers.

Against a background of centuries of pulpit satire, the supposed personal misogyny of Jonson takes a different hue. Swinburne accused him violently:

The "epigram" or rather satire "On the Court Pucelle" goes beyond even the license assumed by Pope in the virulent ferocity of its personal attack on a woman. This may be explained, or at least illustrated, by the fact that Ben Jonson's views regarding womanhood in general were radically cynical though externally chivalrous: *a charge which can be brought against no other poet or dramatist of his age*. He could pay more splendid compliments than any of them to this or that particular woman . . . but *no man* has said coarser (I had well-nigh written viler) things against the sex to which these exceptionally honoured patronesses belonged.<sup>6</sup>

The words here italicized are flatly contradicted by Helen C. White's similar charge brought against Donne:

What Donne really thought of the various noble ladies he courted for patronage we have little way of knowing, but there is an extraordinary

<sup>4</sup> Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, p. 377.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387.

<sup>6</sup> Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 107.

difference in tone and value between what he implies in his various letters and dedications to his female patronesses and what he says of their sex in sermon and satire. . . . The making of such allusions would be understandable, if Donne had held ideals of women's intellectual capacity like those which Sir Thomas More held, but, as we have seen, he most emphatically did not.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps Miss White had in mind Donne's lines about the wandering spirit in "The Progresse of the Soule":

. . . she knew treachery,  
Rapine, deceit, and lust, and ills enow  
To be a woman.

Or perhaps she had in mind one of the paradoxes, holding "That it is possible to finde some vertue in some women."<sup>8</sup> This confutation of Swinburne's assertion that Jonson was the only Elizabethan with "radically cynical though externally chivalrous" views on womanhood does not dispose of his whole accusation, however, which is stated still more emphatically by the distinguished Oxford editors:

For the niceties of feminine etiquette he had little regard . . . and the marked and painted Court beauty attracted with peculiar readiness the cynical regard which for him—a few chosen women friends set apart—habitually disrobed womankind of even ordinary grace and virtue.<sup>9</sup>

Not merely was chivalry alien to his nature, but even the most admirable qualities of individual women had to conquer their way to his recognition through a medium of cynical distrust and disparagement of the sex at large. In this very collection, only a couple of pages from the beautiful morning hymn to the Countess of Bedford, the reader comes upon an epigram which suggests in the plainest terms that all women are harlots.<sup>10</sup>

Attacking Swinburne's subjective and impressionistic criticism might be like breaking a butterfly upon a wheel, but a critical statement in the Oxford *Jonson* demands careful consideration. Both accusations rest on the assumption that in one or the other type of poetry (satiric or panegyric) the poet is unlocking his heart; and both assume further that the filthy epigrams come from the depths of their author's soul.

<sup>7</sup> White, *The Metaphysical Poets*, pp. 76, 80.

<sup>8</sup> Donne, *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, ed. by Hayward, pp. 340-41.

<sup>9</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, I, 58-59. <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 367.

The fact that Petrarch himself, the patron saint of the sonneteers, was also sometimes an anti-Petrarchist in the true pulpit tradition indicates another explanation of the apparent inconsistency of Jonson and Donne. Are all three of these writers mere flattering hypocrites? Or are all three writing in the streams of two nearly equal, but conflicting traditions? Is it necessary for them to be more or less sincere in either tradition? Whatever answers apply to the questions concerning these writers will apply to many other writers of the Renaissance, and to some few of the writers of the Middle Ages. On the whole, the earlier writers tend to fall into one or the other camp without much vacillation.

Like his predecessors in pulpit and poetry, Ben emphasizes two feminine sins almost to the exclusion of all others. Goody Polish, however, one of the most consistently evil and dangerous of his characters, is a babbler. Her "humour" is talk, and most of her fellow characters in *The Magnetic Lady* are misled by her copious flow of language into underestimating her capacity for serious evil. It may well be that Ben, like the preacher Bromyard and his own Morose in *The Silent Woman*, thought that talk was evil enough without additional sins, even though he furnished Polish with an abundance of the latter. Lady Politick Would-be also has the sin of verbosity and causes Volpone acute agony; indeed, Jonson's typical Elizabethan habit of abbreviating the names of speakers in his plays makes Lady "Pol." certainly a pun—a pun repeated in *The Magnetic Lady*, for Polish is also "Pol." With these and other characters in the comedies as exceptions, Jonson's satire is directed against pride first and lechery second.

It is woman *par excellence* as a lover of finery, the mirror of fashion, the decked and painted idol of May-tide, that calls down the full fury of the English preachers in satire and complaint. This feminine weakness, if not the source, is at any rate the mirror of some of the other evils. . . . Why after all does the maiden deck herself, but to wander abroad and display herself in public? <sup>11</sup>

Substitute Ben Jonson for the English preachers—perhaps this would not be exactly a substitution, for Ben occupies a poetic pulpit frequently—and this passage is an excellent introduction to Jonson's

<sup>11</sup> Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, p. 90.

satires on women. There is another of his predecessors in the literature of finery who deserves brief consideration. William Camden, Ben's master and friend, wrote an essay on "Apparel" in his *Remains concerning Britain* ("the only book in English which Camden prepared for the press").<sup>12</sup> Camden's essay begins with a brief conjectural suggestion of the beginnings of clothing, tells the anecdote which is still alive about the half-naked man who wondered that the heavily dressed man could bear to leave his face exposed, "for all my body is made of the same metal that your face is." After hardly more than a bow in the direction of Rome, the essay proceeds to trace English clothing from the skins of beasts down to the very elaborate Elizabethan costumes. Historically the work is interesting and valuable, for Camden consulted old manuscripts, monuments, "old glass windows, and ancient arras." But most pertinent here is the evident disapproval of extravagant and outlandish costume. Along with other early authorities, Chaucer's parson is quoted to show the extravagance, waste, vanity, and indecency of the clothing in the time of Richard II. "And Queen Anne, wife of King Richard the second, who first taught English women to ride on side-saddles, when as heretofore they rid astride, brought in high head attire piked with horns, and long trained gowns for women." Camden does not quote Lydgate on the subject of women's "horns," but he does quote a long extract from *The Regement of Princes* by Lydgate's contemporary Occleve: "Of Pride, and of wast clothing of Lordis mene which is *agens* her astate."

When he descends to his own time Camden says:

How we have offended lately herein, I refer to every particular man's own knowledge. I fear it will be verified . . . when our posterity shall see our pictures, they shall think we were foolishly proud in apparel. . . . They which mislike most our present vanity herein, let them remember that of Tacitus: All things run round, and as the seasons of the year, so men's manners have their revolutions.<sup>13</sup>

This essay by Camden is reasonably conclusive evidence that Ben was acquainted with the historical as well as the contemporary follies in English dress, also that the pupil may have found the master's interest contagious.

<sup>12</sup> Wright, *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, p. 316.

<sup>13</sup> Camden, *Remains concerning Britain*, p. 220.

Chief emblem of pride in Jonson's opinion was extravagant personal adornment. Even Livia, Sempronia, and Fulvia in the Roman tragedies owe much of their vigor to their Elizabethan vanities; they might have been drawn by one with little or no classical learning. *Poetaster*, however, presents much more striking examples of classical satire modified or intensified by Elizabethan satire. The first three scenes of Act III are, as a marginal note by Jonson indicates, adapted from Horace, Book I, *Satire* 9. The seventy-eight lines of the original are expanded to some three hundred and fifty. Many of the additional lines are given over to Crispinus's rhapsodies on fashionable clothes: court curls, spangles, tricks, high gable-ends, tuscanes-tops, coronets, arches, and pyramids.

J. H. Penniman finds kindred passages in sixteenth-century satires: in *Microcynicon*, *Pathway to Heaven*, and, above all, Gosson's *Pleasant Quippes for Upstart Newfangled Gentlewomen*. From the last he quotes:

These flaming heads with staring haire,  
These wyers turnde like hornes of ram;  
These painted faces which they weare,  
Can any tell from whence they cam?

. . .

These glittering cawles of golden plate,  
Wherewith their heads are richly dect,  
Make them to seeme an Angels mate  
In judgment of the simple sect.

To Peacockes I compare them right,  
That glorieth in their feathers bright,  
These perriwigges, ruffes, armed with pinnes,  
These spangles, chaine, and laces all.<sup>14</sup>

Owst reaches Gosson from the earlier rather than the later satires:

. . . even so late a composition as Gosson's *Quippes* . . . presents us with wellnigh all the typical satires of our pulpit within the limits of a single piece. Here are the "sadled" beasts of burden, the Devil's "ginnes" and fowling-nets, his "baytes wherewith to hell he draweth huge heaps" of fish when he chooses to go a-fishing, the masks of the maskers, the

<sup>14</sup> *Jonson's Poetaster and Dekker's Satiromastix*, ed. by J. H. Penniman, p. 211.

armoured "Amazones," the proud peacocks—"whome preachers still in vaine beseech." <sup>15</sup>

Penniman and Owst thus furnish a long and direct genealogy for Jonson's satire on clothing. For example, let us take the cawl, which has returned to popularity in our time, thanks to Norma Shearer's Juliet, and therefore needs no lengthy gloss. Bromyard said of women "wantonly adorned to capture souls": "they are the Devil's decoys, snaring the heedless bird into the gins of the fowler; while their very cauls may be compared to the decoy nets." <sup>16</sup> Jonson praises the Lady Venetia by showing her freedom from the evils of excessive adornment:

Yet, here are no such Trifles brought,  
No cobweb Call's; no surcoates wrought  
With Gold, or Claspes, which might be bought  
On every Stall.

I am certain that the epithet "cobweb" is figurative, rather than merely descriptive: the cawl is a device to snare, one of the "decoy nets," save that Jonson's net is to snare flies, not birds—a metaphor perfectly Jonsonian. The milder use of the "cobweb" image in reference to poems "spun out in name of some of the old Nine" has already been discussed in the third chapter.

Contempt for beauty that can be bought "on every Stall" shows again and again in the poems. The Court Pucell rides to church, "as others doe to Feasts and Playes," to show off her clothing. About two centuries earlier one of Bromyard's sermons introduced Pokerellus, the sacristan of Hell, saying: "Today is a great feast: many folk will see you. Adorn yourself, therefore, that you may be reputed beautiful and that those who behold you may delight in your loveliness!" <sup>17</sup> Ben shifts the emphasis a little, replacing moral indignation with contempt; and like most satirists he gives a personal note to his attack:

Farthest I am from the Idolatrie  
To stufes and Laces, those my Man can buy.

The Pucell, like Gosson's newfangled gentlewomen, wears spangles, but wears them on her "Petticotes," a specification not in Gosson.

<sup>15</sup> Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, p. 402.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 395-96.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 394.

Of course, she has velvet gowns (Dol Common, in *The Alchemist*, had one to wear when she played the queen of the fairies).

Of all the "clothing" pieces, "An Elegie" ("Let me be what I am") is most complete and most violent in its satire. It begins in a jocose personal vein:

Let me be what I am, as Virgil cold,  
As Horace fat; or as Anacreon old;  
No Poets verses yet did ever move,  
Whose readers did not thinke he was in love.

This seems to be a bitter truth, and since it is difficult to imagine fat, comical Ben in love, many of his worthy verses do fail to move readers in general.

The poem continues with a declaration of the right of the poet to vicarious experiences, even love—love of all beauty whatsoever, married or unmarried:

No face, no hand, proportion, line, or Ayre  
Of beautie; but the Muse hath interest in:  
There is not worne that lace, purle, knot or pin,  
But is the Poëts matter: And he must  
When he is furious love, although not lust.

If husbands and fathers do not want their wives and daughters immortalized in verse, let them wish they had foul or deformed ones, "Curst in their Cradles, or there chang'd by Elves." Further warning follows:

Yet keepe those up in sackcloth too, or lether,  
For Silke will draw some sneaking Songster thither.  
It is a ryiming Age, and Verses swarme  
At every stall; The Cittie Cap's a charme.

With these lines the cat is out of the bag; this is not to be what it at first seemed, a poem about the poet Jonson and beauty, but a poem about silk and songsters and city caps. This "so-called Elegy" (as Herford entitled it) was probably written fairly late in Jonson's career, but the lines quoted are of a piece with the satire directed against Crispinus and Mistress Cloe in *Poetaster*. The former, being one of the sneaking songsters attracted by the city cap, composed some verses to that charming object:

## TROTH, PUT OUT WOMAN TOO!

Rich was thy hap, sweet, daintie cap,  
 There to be placed:  
 Where thy smooth black, sleek white may smack,  
 And both be graced.

The puppet poet Little-wit in *Bartholomew Fair* is as deeply moved by his own wife's cap as Crispinus by Cloe's.

Another interchange of poetic and dramatic satire is illustrated by the lines:

It is not likely I should now looke downe  
 Upon a Velvet Petticote, or a Gowne,  
 Whose like I have knowne the Taylors Wife put on  
 To doe her Husbands rites in, e're 'twere gone  
 Home to the Customer: his Letcherie  
 Being, the best clothes still to praeoccupie.

This tailor's wife, her husband, and even the petticoat appear in Act IV of *The New Inn*. Sir Glorious Tipto, Bat Burst, and Hodge Huffle are quarreling in their cups, and Fly is trying in vain to quiet them, when Nick Stuffle and his wife Pinnacia Stuffle enter. On their entrance Burst cries, "Slid heer's a Lady!" Huffle, perhaps echoing the ballad of "Thomas Rymer," chimes in, "And a Lady gay!" Later, evidently in song or sing-song, he continues, "A Lady gay, gay. For she is a Lady, gay, gay, gay. For she's a Lady gay."<sup>18</sup> The "Lady gay," instead of becoming frightened like her timorous husband, scolds the latter and says:

Here tie my shooe; and shew my vellute petticote,  
 And my silke stocking! Why doe you make me a Lady,  
 If I may not doe like a Lady, in fine clothes?<sup>19</sup>

On being rescued in spite of herself, Pinnacia is brought with her husband to the inn, where Lady Frampul recognizes both her own dress and her tailor. Pinnacia, somewhat in the manner of Goody Polish, being "dis-Countess'd," but not "dis-countenanc'd," confesses:

It is a foolish tricke Madame, he has;  
 For though he be your Taylour, he is my beast.  
 I may be bold with him, and tell his story.  
 When he makes any fine garment will fit me,  
 Or any rich thing that he thinkes of price,  
 Then must I put it on, and be his *Countesse*,

<sup>18</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, VI, 463.      <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 464.



Before he carry it home vnto the owners.  
 A coach is hir'd, and foure horse, he runnes  
 In his veluet Iacket thus.<sup>20</sup>

The remainder of the speech may be guessed from the corresponding lines in the poem.

The passages in both the poem and the play sound as though actual individuals sat for their portraits; but both passages are satiric, and both fit into their settings. This raises again the question whether a poem is primarily a personal expression or a traditional one. There are several reasons for considering this "Elegy" a formal satire, although Herford attempts to justify Jonson's title; however, he admits, both in his own term "so-called Elegy" and in his critical analysis, that the poem has little in common with classical elegies.<sup>21</sup>

Certain devices characteristic of the formal satire as written by Hall and Marston are apparent in Jonson's poem; so are certain devices of Roman satire. Kathryn A. McEuen gives a brief summary of the latter characteristics; she uses Horace and Juvenal as examples:

First, their satires were written in hexameters. . . . Second, their poems were carefully, sometimes rather closely, constructed. . . . And third, their main interest was in the improvement of social conditions. . . . Since instruction is the chief purpose of satire, it is, naturally, serious. It may at times be coarse or even obscene in its language, but grave ethical import is always to be found.<sup>22</sup>

A distinct addition to satiric theory in the Renaissance, according to Oscar James Campbell, is the confusion of *satire* with *satyr*. This interchange of terms led to additional roughness in verse and violence in expression. Campbell quotes William Rankins ("I am a Satyre, savage in my sport") and Joseph Hall ("The Satyre should be like the Porcupine, That shoots sharp quilles out in each angry line").<sup>23</sup> Marston is even more of a breast-beater in the introductory passages to his satires:

Ye changing Proteans, list,  
 And tremble at a barking satirist.

. . .

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 467.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 358-60.

<sup>22</sup> McEuen, *Classical Influence on the Tribe of Ben*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>23</sup> O. J. Campbell, *Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida*, pp. 35-37.

## TROTH, PUT OUT WOMAN TOO!

Now, grim Reproof, swell in my rough-hued rhyme,  
That thou mayst vex the guilty of our time.

. . .

My soul is vex'd; what power will resist,  
Or dares to stop a sharp-fanged satirist?

O damn'd!

Who would not shake a satire's knotty rod.

These are but samples of a practice which Marston carries to such extremes that he damages the effect of his satiric utterances. He reminds one of the Berserk in *The Saga of Grettir the Strong*, who chewed his shield to make himself angry:

Fie how my wit flags! How heavily  
Methinks I vent dull sprightless poesy! <sup>24</sup>

Although he turns this off with a conceit about the god Mercury's anger at his exposition of so many forms of trickery, one feels that he really needs some stimulant to become truly angry. Jonson rarely, if ever, gives that impression.

If, however, Jonson does not pretend in his poetry that he is a satyr, he knew the convention, and it surely affected his poetry. We may be certain that he was familiar with the satyr theory from Captain Tucca's crude characterization of Horace as a "fusty Satyre" who "smells all Goate." The title page of the 1616 Jonson Folio (reprinted in the 1640 Folio and reproduced in Volume IV of the Oxford *Jonson*) has figures emblematic of five Elizabethan dramatic types: *Tragedia* and *Comoedia* occupy the important niches between the sustaining columns of a building; above them, among the ornaments of the superstructure, *Satyr* and *Pastor* stand, or perhaps one should say lean; above and between the latter pair is *Tragi-Comoedia*. The Satyr could hardly be other than the emblem for the "comicall satyres."

During this explanatory digression the tailor and his wife Pinnacia have been somewhat left up in the air, but their return and the remainder of the poem will be much clearer because of the explanation. In his outburst against clothes-worshippers of the tailor's ilk Ben resembles the Satyr in roughness and savagery:

<sup>24</sup> Marston, *Works*, ed. by Bullen, III, 262, 276, 312-13, 338.

Put a Coach-mare in Tissue, must I horse  
Her presently?

Vulgar this image may be, but not commonplace. The coach-mare is probably the lineal descendant of Bromyard's "Devil's pack-horses," who were overdressed "city madams." The rhythm of the line does not depart from permissible variations in the iambic pattern, but its effect is as rough as some of Marston's unscannable lines.

The remainder of the poem, about half of it, satirizes men who are intrigued by the baubles of clothing more than it satirizes women. The gallery is varied, but does not give the effect of quarry sought merely to fill out a satire; all the characters belong in the work. In this Jonson was more akin to Juvenal than to his own contemporaries.

First to appear is the "poore Groom," who made most solemn love to the hanging gowns left in his care:

. . . the poore wretch, which though he play'd in prose,  
He would have done in verse, with any of those  
Wrung on the Withers, by Lord Loves despight,  
Had he had the facultie to reade, and write!

"Wrung on the Withers" continues the horse imagery, which often goes with Jonson's comments on lust. The glimpse of Lord Love (Dan Cupid) is reminiscent of C. S. Lewis's allegorical figure whose appearances as the opponent of Reason and Nature enliven Jean de Meun, Chaucer, and Gower.

The songsters, like our old friend Crispinus, appear in more detail than in the mere mention of them earlier in the poem; most important is the one

That (in pure Madrigall) unto his Mother  
Commended the French-hood, and Scarlet gowne  
The Lady Mayresse pass'd in through the Towne,  
Unto the Spittle Sermon.

This is two-edged and represents a return of the same theme played in the sermons and in the "Court Pucell."

The conclusion of the poem clinches the idea of formal satire in two ways:

Let the poore fooles enjoy their follies, love  
A Goat in Velvet; or some block could move

Under that cover; an old Mid-wives hat!  
 Or a Close-stoole so cas'd; or any fat  
 Bawd, in a Velvet scabberd! I envy  
 None of their pleasures! nor will aske thee, why  
 Thou art jealous of thy Wifes, or Daughters Case:  
 More then of eithers manners, wit, or face!

These lines are the "scornful dismissal" which Campbell finds one of the three essentials of a good satiric portrait; there are better and more obvious examples of this device in other poems by Jonson, but this instance is sufficiently clear. The final couplet contains the moral sting of a sermon.

Along with the tailor's wife, most of the overdressed individuals satirized by Jonson are guilty of social deception as well as vanity. This also is in keeping with the English religious and secular satire which preceded and accompanied his works. One of the fourteenth-century preachers complained: "Now is the knave clothed as was formerly the knight, and the servant girl as her mistress. It is a great mistake."<sup>25</sup> Camden refers to the threatened impoverishment of England because so many people below the nobility were sending good money out of the country to buy extravagant clothing. But Jonson's attacks always center on the vanity, social deception and extravagance being secondary. Sometimes, however, vanity is a symptom or a cause of another sin.<sup>6</sup>

Hornet's wife, who is dismissed in a single couplet, is evidently akin to the lady in Chaucer's "Cook's Tale":

Hornet, thou hast thy wife drest, for the stall,  
 To draw thee custome: but her selfe gets all.

This couple have a counterpart in Marston's *Scourge of Villainy*:

Shall Cossus make his well-faced wife a stale,  
 To yield his braided ware a quicker sale? <sup>26</sup>

It is noteworthy that Jonson emphasizes the dress, Marston the face, of the tradesman's wife. Lady Would-be is a more sinister figure:

Fine Madame Would-Bee? wherefore should you feare,  
 That love to make so well, a child to beare?  
 The world reputes you barren; but I know

<sup>25</sup> Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, p. 369.

<sup>26</sup> Marston, *Works*, ed. by Bullen, III, 325.

Your 'pothecary, and his drug sayes no.  
 Is it the paine affrights? that's soone forgot.  
 Or your complexions losse? you have a pot,  
 That can restore that. Will it hurt your feature?  
 To make amends, yo'are thought a wholesome creature.  
 What should the cause be? Oh, you live at Court:  
 And there's both losse of time, and losse of sport  
 In a great belly. Write, then on thy wombe;  
 Of the not borne, yet buried, here's the tombe.

Douglas Bush points out a passage in *Andromeda Liberata* (1614), by Chapman, that accuses a woman who denies her lover as "worse than a homicide," because she prevents the birth of children. Jonson's indictment of Lady Would-be is far more serious than what Bush calls Chapman's "amatory casuistry."<sup>27</sup>

Lady Would-be's traffic with her apothecary recalls the sinister scene between Livia and Eudemus in *Sejanus*. The combination of physician and "beautician" is best drawn in Eudemus, but this epigram indicates that there were English Eudemuses as well as Latin ones.

Cosmetics could hardly escape the scourger of female foibles, and Jonson could almost be called the poet *par excellence* of cosmetics with the same justice that he was called the poet *par excellence* of alchemy. Indeed, Volpone, as Scoto Mantuanus, promises as much from his beauty preparations as Subtle promises from his stone; and some of the dangerous chemicals used in one science were used in the other. Marston, too, presents a lady

So steep'd in lemon juice, so surphuled,  
 I cannot see her face.

. . .

Alas! her soul struts round about her neck;  
 Her seat of sense is her rebato set;  
 Her intellectual is a feigned niceness,  
 Nothing but clothes and simpering preciseness.<sup>28</sup>

To illustrate the reference to cosmetics here, Bullen quoted Guilpin's *Skialetheia* (1598):

<sup>27</sup> Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition*, p. 213.

<sup>28</sup> Marston, *Works*, ed. by Bullen, III, 350. "Surphuled" may be a misprint for "sulphured."

## TROTH, PUT OUT WOMAN TOO!

They were plain asses if they did not know  
 Quicksilver, juice of lemons, borax too,  
 Alum, oil tartar, whites of eggs, and galls,  
 Are made the bawds to morphew, scurfs, and scalls.<sup>29</sup>

Jonson probably had the more dangerous qualities of the cosmetics in mind when he wrote the epigrams "To Sicknesse" and "To the Small Poxe." The first of these is similar to the "Execration," except that Vulcan's food is paper, Sicknesse's human flesh. Both devourers are indiscriminate: Vulcan makes no distinction between good and bad books; Sicknesse molests not only men, but also women—worse than that, he does not confine himself to the "wast livers" in the fair sex:

If thy leannesse love such food,  
 There are those, that, for thy sake,  
 Do enough; and who would take  
 Any paines; yea, think it price,  
 To become thy sacrifice.  
 That distill their husbands land  
 In decoctions; and are mann'd  
 With ten Emp'ricks, in their chamber,  
 Lying for the spirit of amber.  
 That for th'oye of Talck, dare spend  
 More than citizens dare lend  
 Them, and all their officers . . .  
 Dare entayle their loves on any,  
 Bald, or blind, or nere so many:  
 And, for thee at common game,  
 Play away, health, wealth, and fame.

It is clear that *cosmetical* vanity and lust are closely associated in Jonson's satire, as in that of the preachers who have railed at painted Jezebels in every age. In this epigram, however, the railing is more jocular than severe; perhaps the rollicking trochaic couplets are largely responsible for this effect.

"An Epigram. To the Small Poxe" is evidently later than "To Sicknesse": the latter was printed in "The Forest" (1616), and the former in "Under-wood" (1640). "To the Small Poxe," as its title indicates, is more specific and concrete in every way than its predecessor, although it is little more than a condensation of the earlier piece.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, note.

There is no horror of the terrible disease in this occasional poem, although its occasion was one that might well have called for horror. Kenneth Myrick tells the story of Sir Philip Sidney's mother and father: when Sir Henry left home on a military expedition, his wife was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen; when he returned, the small pox had destroyed every vestige of her beauty.<sup>30</sup> Lady Sidney contracted the disease from Queen Elizabeth; in view of the story of Lady Sidney explanation of the Queen's sensitiveness about her own appearance in later life is not far to seek. Perhaps we may not admire the taste of a poet who can turn the smallpox into a graceful conceit to compliment a lady; but, remembering the death and dread of death caused by the disease in his time, we may admire his courage:

## AN EPIGRAM

*To the Small Poxe*

Envious and foule Disease, could there not be  
 One beautie in an Age, and free from thee?  
 What did she worth thy spight? were there not store  
 Of those that set by their false faces more  
 Then this did by her true? she never sought  
 Quarrell with Nature, or in ballance brought  
 Art her false servant; Nor for Sir Hugh Plot,  
 Was drawne to practise other hue, then that  
 Her owne blood gave her: Shee ne're had, nor hath  
 Any believe, in Madam Baud-bees bath,  
 Or Turners oyle of Talck. Nor ever got  
 Spanish receipt, to make her teeth to rot.  
 What was the cause then? Thought'st thou in disgrace  
 Of Beautie, so to nullifie a face,  
 That heaven should make no more; or should amisse,  
 Make all hereafter, had'st thou ruin'd this?  
 I, that thy Ayme was; but her fate prevail'd:  
 And scorn'd, thou'ast showne thy malice, but hast fail'd.

This is surely one example of improvement of occasional poetry over general poetry. The poem is more unified than "To Sicknesse." It is far more specific: "disease" becomes "small pox"; the best ladies are replaced by "one beautie in an age"; the cosmetics are specified—

<sup>30</sup> Myrick, *Sir Philip Sidney as a Literary Craftsman*, pp. 235-36.

"oyle of Talck" becomes "Turners oyle of Talck"; even the textbook of feminine adornment by Sir Hugh Platt (Plot) is brought in.<sup>81</sup> Yet with all this, the satire becomes incidental and subordinate to the central theme of the poem, the triumph of the lady's beauty over the malice of disease.

In this poem, as in so many of the other satiric or partially satiric pieces, the poet is indebted to the dramatist. Subtle was acquainted with oil of talc, perhaps Turner's:

A Lady, that is past the feate of body,  
Though not of minde, and hath her face decay'd  
Beyond all cure of paintings, you restore  
With the oyle of Talck; there you have made a friend:  
And all her friends.

Clerimont's lady in *The Silent Woman* seems to have known it, too, for she is described as wiping her oily lips on the page as though he were a sponge. The closeness between Jonson's "comicall satyre" and satirical poetry can hardly be over-emphasized.

The Court Pucell, whom we have already seen as an example of pride, is clearly warned of the danger of unrestrained lust:

. . . take heed,  
This Age would lend no faith to Dorrels Deed;  
Or if it would, the Court is the worst place,  
Both for the Mothers, and the Babes of grace,  
For there the wicked in the Chaire of scorne,  
Will cal't a Bastard, when a Prophet's borne.

The vocabulary, especially "the wicked in the Chaire of scorne," is again reminiscent of the pulpit.

The Oxford editors, as well as Swinburne, consider this poem primarily a personal attack on Cecilia Bulstrode, basing their identification on the extended version of the *Conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden*, first printed in 1833.<sup>82</sup> Certainly two or three of the characteristics of the Pucell sound like an individual, not a type: her forcing a Muse "with Tribade lust," writing news "in an Epi-

<sup>81</sup> Wright, *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, pp. 595-96; see also Newdigate's glossarial index.

<sup>82</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, I, 59; II, 356. See also Percy Simpson's note in the *Times Literary Supplement*, March 6, 1930, p. 187.



caene fury," twice forswearing her contract, entertaining wits, lords, and sermoneers are somewhat out of the general stream of satiric types. Even so, the poem is valid, artistic satire, from characterization to the scornful advice to "steale away from Court, while yet thy fame hath some small day." This dismissal is not at the very end of the poem, unless we consider that the dismissal is not complete until the reason for it is given; the reason is contained in the passage about the wicked, quoted above.

An important light is shed on Elizabethan satiric practices by Marston:

Yet, I fear me, I shall be much, much injured by two sorts of readers: the one being ignorant, not knowing the nature of a satire (which is under feigned private names to note general vices), will needs wrest each feigned name to a private unfeigned person; the other too subtile . . .<sup>83</sup>

There can be no reasonable doubt that both Jonson and Marston at times borrowed individual traits to heighten their satiric or dramatic characters. But the completed works must stand on qualities other than mere delineation of personal traits; and unless we are prepared, as some nineteenth-century critics seem to have been, to identify every character in every satirical play and poem, we must consider the works as literature, not autobiography. "The Court Pucell" is good satire.

It is neither so pleasant nor so proper to illustrate lust as vanity; nor is an attack on lust so likely to vary from century to century or from age to age. Therefore, brief mention will suffice for most of the members of the lustful group. "Gypsee, new baud" is hardly more of an individual than is Hornet's wife; but her neighbor in the "Epigrams," Giles's wife Jone, is the heroine of an interlude-in-little worthy of Master Heywood himself. There is nothing of the moralist evident in this piece, and save for the acid humor and the brief characterization of its heroine, it has no place in a study of satire. "Mill, My Ladies Woman" is handled with ironic humor; evidently fleshly sinners did not greatly rouse the "satyr" unless they supplemented their weakness with vanity or hypocrisy.

A small group of women in Jonson's poetry require special con-

<sup>83</sup> Marston, *Works*, ed. by Bullen, III, 381-82.

sideration. They are named, but are often little more than names. There is hardly anything in the passages which deal with them to suggest true satire: Ben shows no wish to reform them, shows, indeed, no particular disposition to attack them beyond using them in unsavory surroundings. Almost certainly some or all of them were actual people of Ben's time, just as Bankes was.

When Dol Common is rudely hustled out of the window by Face, she is followed by his insulting promise:

Thou shalt ha'my letter to mistris Amo. . . .

Or Madame Caesarean [in the quarto: "Madame Imperiall"].

This must be the Madam Caesar who took the part of Proserpine in "The Famous Voyage." About the only possible excuse for her appearance in either work is that she must have been well enough known around London so that the mere mention of her name would arouse laughter. The same applies to Kate Arden, of both the "Voyage" and the "Execration," except that Kate's name had the great advantage of rhyming with Paris Garden, where the bears were kept and baited. It is hinted in the "Voyage" that her relation to the bears is olfactory; it is further hinted in the "Execration" that perhaps she furnished the spark which set the Globe Theatre on fire (there is a pun about the Worlds Ruines).

Three names of this allusive nature appear in a passage in "An Epistle to a Friend, to Perswade Him to the Warres." They accompany a satirical passage on the social climber:

The Dame is steele,  
For these with her young Companie shee'll enter,  
Where Pittes, or Wright, or Modet would not venter,  
And comes by these Degrees, the Stile t'inherit  
Of woman of fashion, and a Lady of spirit:  
Nor is the title question'd with our proud,  
Great, brave, and fashion'd folde, these are allow'd  
Adulteries now, are not so hid, or strange.

It is not clear whether Ben means here that such depraved creatures as Pittes, Wright, and Modet dare not enter the dangerous company which "the Dame" frequents or whether he means that the three are too virtuous to enter that company. Judging from his usual satiric procedure, the former interpretation seems more likely. Evidently

the names must have meant something to the London reader of Ben's day.

The last of these shadowy names with solid but unknown or forgotten bodies appears in the "civill curse" at the close of the "Execration": "Thy Wives pox on thee, and *B. Bs. too.*" The Quarto and Duodecimo versions, which appeared at the same time as the 1640 Folio, spell out the name of "Besse Braughton." Aubrey, spelling the name "Broughton," furnished a few pungent facts about her life—though Aubrey is so good at inferential biography with "corroborative detail" (as Pooh-Bah would say) that it is not safe to trust him too far. *The Calendar of State Papers, Charles I, 1635-6, Domestic*, contains two items concerning one Elizabeth Broughton, divorced wife of William Broughton of Doncaster, who had been accused of "adultery with several persons" and had been excommunicated for not appearing to answer the charges. Her suit for alimony was thrown out of court because "the said Elizabeth was a person of a notorious ill and scandalous life, and declined her diocesan and disobeyed the censure of the church."<sup>34</sup> Of course, this identical name and fame may be merely coincidence; but it does suggest at least a possible explanation of Jonson's allusions to women with bad reputations. The Doncaster Bess of 1635 may well be the London Bess of 1623.

According to Owst the English preachers by no means singled out woman to bear the brunt of their attacks on vanity and love of finery: man was also included.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the best way to combat the idea of Ben's misogyny is to turn to the poems dealing satirically with men. In order not to break too suddenly with the atmosphere of perfumes, silks, brocades, and cosmetics, an atmosphere reminiscent of the odors of stiff, empty costumes in a museum, let us begin with the effeminate men who attract Ben's wrath in play, poem, and essay. Again there are precedents in English satire.

Oscar James Campbell calls attention to the parade of creatures in Gascoign's *Stele Glas* and gives cogent reasons for believing them to be effeminate men rather than women;<sup>36</sup> the passage from Guil-

<sup>34</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Charles I, 1635-36, Domestic*, IX, 505, 513.

<sup>35</sup> Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, p. 404.

<sup>36</sup> O. J. Campbell, *Comicall Satyre and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida*, pp. 87-88.



indignant satirist overpowers the poet, and breaks in with, "Who can behold their Manners; and not cloud-like upon them lighten?" This is really but a variant of Marston's somewhat conventional, "Who would not shake a satire's knotty rod?" But Jonson is using the convention without openly referring to it, and the result is that the indignation appears completely personal, not merely that of the professional satirist. Jonson undoubtedly felt some of this indignation, or he would hardly have written the poem; but he expresses his indignation with materials and methods already established. He goes on:

If nature could  
Not make a verse; Anger; or laughter would,  
To see 'hem aye discoursing with their Glasse,  
How they may make some one that day an Asse,  
Planting their purles, and Curles spread forth like Net,  
And every Dressing for a Pitfall set. . . .

The feminine snares of the sermons have here become masculine, but they are the same snares and set for the same purpose:

Be at their Visits, see 'hem squemish, sick,  
Ready to cast, at one, whose band sits ill . . .  
And jealous of each other, yet thinke long  
To be abroad chanting a baudie song,  
And laugh, & measure thighes, then squeake, spring, itch,  
Doe all the tricks of a saut Lady Bitch . . .  
Coach'd, or on foot-cloth, thrice chang'd every day,  
To teach each suit, he has the ready way  
From Hide-Parke to the Stage, where at the last  
His deare and borrow'd Bravery he must cast?  
When not his Combes, his Curling-irons, his Glasse,  
Sweet bags, sweet Powders, nor sweet words will passe  
For lesse Securitie?

This sort of thing goes on and on, until the reader is likely to ask with the poet:

Can we not leave this worme? or will we not?  
Is that the truer excuse, or have we got  
In this, and like, an itch of Vanitie,  
That scratching now's our best Felicitie?  
Well, let it goe.

Ben does not "let it goe" without another fifty lines or so; but perhaps this is enough to indicate contents and method of the poem. The outburst just quoted is surely another example of the satirist's dismissal. Both the gallery and the dismissal is almost duplicated in "A Speech according to Horace," which Mrs. McEuen considers the best example of Jonson's formal satire and one of the two poems whose titles indicate that their author considered them satires: "*Speech*," according to her interpretation, "may well have been Jonson's rather inaccurate rendition of Horace's *sermo*." <sup>37</sup> Perhaps, though, Jonson's avoidance of the term "satire," although he practiced the genre frequently, may be explained by the troubles of the practicing satirists and the prohibition by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London of the printing of satires and epigrams. This prohibition had surely long since lost its effect when Jonson was writing the pieces under discussion, but he may have chosen to let a sleeping issue lie.

The "Speech" is in many ways a companion piece to the "Elegy" ("Let me be what I am") and is separated from it in "Under-wood" only by the "Execration." A single passage will show its satirical quality:

The Academie, where the Gallants meet—  
What, to make legs? yes, and to smell most sweet,  
All that they doe at Playes. O, but first here  
They learne and studie; and then practise there.  
But why are all these Irons i'the fire  
Of severall makings? helps, helps, t'attire  
His Lordship. That is for his Band, his haire  
This, and that box his Beautie to repaire;  
This other for his eye-browes. Hence, away,  
I can no longer on these pictures stay,  
These Carkasses of honour; Taylors blocks,  
Cover'd with Tissue, whose prosperitie mocks  
The fate of things; whilst totter'd vertue holds  
Her broken Armes up, to their emptie moulds.

Marston dismisses his two-visaged lady in terms very similar to Jonson's "Hence, away."

Out on these puppets, painted images,  
Haberdashers' shops, torchlight maskeries,

<sup>37</sup> McEuen, *Classical Influence on the Tribe of Ben*, p. 47.

Perfuming-pans, Dutch ancients, glow-worms bright,  
 That soil our souls, and damp our reason's light!  
 Away, away, hence coachman, go enshrine  
 Thy new-glazed puppet in port Esquiline! <sup>38</sup>

The second poem designated as a satire by Jonson is a fragmentary attack on an unnamed woman: "Doe not you aske to know her." Unquestionably Ben has succeeded in giving the impression that he is speaking in person, although again he is no more violent in his denunciation of the sex than the preachers:

A Womans friendship! God whom I trust in,  
 Forgive me this one foolish deadly sin;  
 Amongst my many other, that I may  
 No more, I am sorry for so fond cause, say  
 At fifty yeares, almost, to value it,  
 That ne're was knowne to last above a fit?  
 Or have the least of Good, but what it must  
 Put on for fashion, and take up on trust:  
 Knew I all this afore? had I perceiv'd,  
 That their whole life was wickednesse, though weav'd  
 Of many Colours; outward fresh, from spots,  
 But their whole inside full of ends, and knots?  
 Knew I, that all their Dialogues, and discourse,  
 Were such as I will now relate, or worse?

At this crucial point the Folio gives the helpful note: "Here, something is wanting." Hence, the relation, if it was ever written, is lost. The remainder of the fragment follows:

Knew I this Woman? yes; And you doe see,  
 How penitent I am, or I should be?  
 Doe not you aske to know her, she is worse  
 Then all Ingredients made into one curse,  
 And that pour'd out upon Man-kind can be!  
 Thinke but the Sin of all her sex, 'tis she!  
 I could forgive her being proud! a whore!  
 Perjur'd! and painted! if she were no more—,  
 But she is such, as she might, yet forestall  
 The Divell; and be the damning of us all.

Lest this apparent self-expression give too much comfort to those who support the theory of personal misogyny, it may be well to quote a companion piece which follows it immediately.

<sup>38</sup> Marston, *Works*, ed. by Bullen, III, 351.

## TROTH, PUT OUT WOMAN TOO!

## A LITTLE SHRUB GROWING BY

Aske not to know this Man. If fame should speake  
 His name in any mettall, it would breake.  
 Two letters were enough the plague to teare  
 Out of his Grave, and poysen every eare.  
 A parcell of Court-durt, a heape, and masse  
 Of all vice hurld together, there he was,  
 Proud, false, and trecherous, vindictive, all  
 That thought can adde, unthankfull, the lay-stall  
 Of putrid flesh alive! of blood, the sinke!  
 And so I leave to stirre him, lest he stinke.

These compliments equal anything paid to a woman in the complete works.

On the whole it is safer to consider both misanthropic and misogynistic invectives the speech of the formal satirist, as Jonson himself explained to Katherine, Lady Aubigny:

I, therefore, who professe my selfe in love  
 With every vertue, wheresoere it move,  
 And howsoever; as I am at fewd  
 With sinne and vice, though with a throne endew'd . . .  
 Madame, be bold to use this truest glasse:  
 Wherein, your forme, you still the same shall find;  
 Because nor it can change, nor such a mind.

The very image here is the same as Gascoign's true "stele glas," the unflattering mirror held up to nature.

It would be unfair to leave a study of Jonson's women without some consideration of "To the World. A farewell for a Gentlewoman, vertuous and noble." This poem, in which Swinburne found "a savour of George Herbert's style,"<sup>39</sup> is one of at least six poems spoken "in the person of Woman kind," to quote the title of one of them. It is the earliest of the six, being the only one printed in the 1616 Folio. In it the "false world" itself is the vain and evil woman of the sermons.

I know thy formes are studied arts,  
 Thy subtile wayes, be narrow straits;  
 Thy curtesie but sodaine starts,  
 And what thou call'st thy gifts are baits.

<sup>39</sup> Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 103.



I know too, though thou strut, and paint,  
 Yet art thou both shrunke up, and old;  
 That onely fooles make thee a saint,  
 And all thy good is to be sold.  
 I know thou whole art but a shop  
 Of toyes, and trifles, traps, and snares,  
 To take the weake, or make them stop:  
 Yet art thou falsen then thy wares.

Herford considered the figure of the world as a painted hag evidence of Ben's cynical regard of the feminine (he did not, however, notice that in "An Epistle to a Friend" the world, leavened with madness, "rebells against *his* Maker"). Of equal or greater significance than the choice of the image is the choice of a woman to speak Ben's ideas in this poem, the ideas often expressed in his most personal utterances. The author deserting the Comick Muse in the "apologeticall Dialogue" at the end of *Poetaster* speaks in almost the same terms:

POLYPOSUS: Y'are undone then.  
 AUTHOR: With whom?  
 POL: The world.  
 AUTHOR: The baud!

And something of the same attitude shows in the "Ode to Himselfe."

Come leave the loathed Stage,  
 And the more loathsome Age,  
 Where pride and impudence in faction knit,  
 Usurpe the Chaire of wit.<sup>40</sup>

Certainly no convention demanded the choice of a woman to deliver this very Jonsonian farewell; nor can an accusation of hypocrisy be leveled against it, since no flattery of a patroness, or any other person, is involved.

<sup>40</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, p. 291.

## CHAPTER V

# *The Learned Librarie of Don Quixote*

THE "Execration" offers to Vulcan's maw only "pieces of the Legend," indicating that some saints' lives were worthy of survival; but it makes no exceptions in its consignment of chivalric romance to oblivion:

Had I compil'd from Amadis de Gaule,  
Th'Esplandians, Arthur's, Palmerins, and all  
The learned Librarie of Don Quixote. . . .  
Thou then hadst had some colour for thy flames,  
On such my serious follies.

Included in the varied heap of matter fit for Vulcan's consumption are:

The whole summe  
Of errant Knight-hood, with the Dames, and Dwarfes;  
The charmed Boates, and the enchanted Wharfes,  
The Tristram's, Lanc'lots, Turpins, and the Peer's,  
All the madde Rolands, and sweet Oliveer's;  
To Merlins Marvailles, and his Caballs losse.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of Jonson's known temperament these two passages have been enough to convince some scholars that the great classicist dismissed all the florid romances of his time with contempt. Kathryn A. McEuen, for instance, believes that the second passage "reveals Jonson's attitude toward literary types"; however, she quotes a passage of Juvenal in which the Latin satirist makes a similar complaint. He professes to be tired of stories about creatures like Telephus, Orestes, and Mars.<sup>2</sup> The similarity of the passage in Jonson's poem to a bit of Juvenalian satire makes it less likely to be a dogmatic expression of personal preference. It may be wise to withhold judgment on this point until after a more thorough survey of the estate of chivalry in Renaissance England.

<sup>1</sup> Newdigate's glossarial index gives "Merlin's horse" for *Caball*; but "secret wisdom" or "occult power" (*cabala*, not *caballo*) is a more likely interpretation according to Harry Morgan Ayres; see NED.

<sup>2</sup> McEuen, *Classical Influence on the Tribe of Ben*, pp. 46-47.

Although it is pleasant to know that Ben was acquainted with his miraculous Spanish contemporary's masterpiece, the acquaintance is not necessary to explain his serious or satiric references to chivalric romance. The high-flown romance of chivalry was fully as popular in England as it was in Spain. Louis B. Wright traces a century-long cycle of popularity of works like *Amadis* and *Palmerin*. He begins with a study of the library of Captain Cox (1575), whose chief claim to fame is that he devised part of the entertainment at Kenilworth for the momentous visit of Queen Elizabeth. (Perhaps Jonsonian will grant him an additional morsel of fame, since his ghost, riding in a hobby horse, is the presenter of Ben's *Masque of Owls*.) Captain Cox had, among other volumes, copies of "King Arthurs book, Huon of Burdeaus, The foour suns of Aymon, Beuys of Hampton, . . . Howleglas, Gargantua, Robinhood, Adambel, Clim of the clough & William of cloudesley, . . . Skogan, Collin cloout, . . . Elynor Rummig," and more than one hundred ballads.<sup>3</sup>

A little too late for this library of the Captain's appeared translations of *Amadis de Gaule* and the *Palmerin* romances. Anthony Munday translated not only the *Amadis* but also "eight or nine parts of the Palmerin series which narrated the adventures of the original Palmerin de Oliva and his knightly descendants to the third and fourth generation," the earliest of these parts probably dating from 1581. Also, during the last quarter of the sixteenth century appeared *The Mirrour of Knighthood*, to which belong "the two noble children, The Knight of the Sunne, and Rosicleer." But the reader who wishes to exhaust the list of romances had best turn to Wright's chapter on "Stories for Amusement and Edification" in his *Middle Class Culture*. It is enough to say that the popularity of these romances was tremendous and that the references to that vogue are numerous in the poetry, prose, and drama of the period.

Naturally, a literary fashion of this sort aroused ridicule. One of the milder of the critics was Sir Philip Sidney, who recommended *Amadis* for its moral efficacy, although as literature he referred to it somewhat condescendingly.<sup>4</sup> However, Sidney did not scruple to use parts of the *Amadis* as source material for his *Arcadia*. Francis

<sup>3</sup> Wright, *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>4</sup> Myrick, *Sir Philip Sidney as a Literary Craftsman*, pp. 214, 308.

Meres included in *Palladis Tamia* (1598) a condemnation of *Amadis*, *Palmerin*, and almost all the romances in Captain Cox's library, though there is no reason to assume that he knew anything about the Captain's taste in books; his references to these volumes merely show how typical of the general reading public that worthy was. Nashe and Henry Parrot<sup>5</sup> also expressed contempt for authors and readers of romances. Joseph Hall recorded his objections to stale wonders in terms not unlike Jonson's:

Tho what ayl'd mee, I might not well as they  
 Rake up some for-worne tales that smothered lay  
 In chimney corners smok'd with winter fires  
 To read and rocke asleepe our drouzy Sires,  
 No man his threshold better knowes, then I  
 Brutes first arrivall, and first victory,  
 Saint Georges Sorrell, or his crosse of blood,  
 Arthurs round Bord, or Caledonian wood,  
 Or holy battels of bold Charlemaine,  
 What were his knights did Salems siege maintaine;  
 How the mad Rivall of fayre Angelice  
 Was Phisick't from the new-found Paradice;  
 High-stories they; which with their swelling straine  
 Have riven Frontoes braod [sic] Rehearsall-Plane.  
 But so to fill up bookes both backe and side  
 What needs it: Are there not enow beside? <sup>6</sup>

It is no surprise to find Jonson among these critics. As early as 1600 he drew in *Puntarvolo* a picture of a ridiculous knight who might also be taken for a first sketch of the great Don himself. Carlo Bufone describes him as follows:

When he is mounted, he lookes like the signe of the George, that's all I know; save, that in stead of a dragon, he will brandish against a tree, and breake his sword as confidently upon the knottie barke, as the other did upon the skales of the beast.

And later, after the knight has fallen on evil days:

S'lud, he looks like an image carv'd out of box, full of knots: his face is (for all the world) like a Dutch purse, with the mouth downeward, his

<sup>5</sup> Henry Parrot was an epigrammatist who flourished in the early sixteenth century; he was the author of *Springs for Woodcocks* and other works. See DNB, XV, 369.

<sup>6</sup> Hall, *Die Satiren Halls*, ed. by Schulze, p. 109.

beard the tassels: and he walks (let me see) as melancholy as one o' the Masters side in the Counter.

If the dates of publication did not make it impossible, one would be tempted to see a copy of the Knight of the Woeful Figure in the person of Puntarvolo, down to his windmill-tree-trunks.

C. R. Baskervill saw in Puntarvolo the first indication of the dramatist's interest in satirizing chivalry:

From the time when Jonson studied the knightly procedure of Puntarvolo, an interest in the medieval conventions apparently grew upon him, and gradually this interest became centered in the Court of Love as an excellent device for satirizing women.<sup>7</sup>

However, Puntarvolo is satirized only partially as a ridiculous figure of romance, and only in the earlier scenes does he appear in this role. Most of the satire is directed against his plan to make money by taking out travel insurance on himself, his dog, and his cat. His wooing of his wife at the window and the fiction of the castle are similar to the Don's adventures. Carlo calls them "a tedious chapter of courtship, after Sir Lancelot, and Queen Guenever." But Puntarvolo is "a poore knight errant" only during his first appearance.

Nor is the satire in *The New Inn* as important as Baskervill indicated. Indeed, the Court of Love shows Lovel to such advantage that the fractious fastidious lady is captivated by him; and the pair, instead of receiving a scornful dismissal, are given a happy wedding. True, Lovel, like Sir Philip Sidney, recommends Homeric heroes rather than knights errant as examples to be followed by the complete gentleman:

He had no Arthurs, nor no Rosicleer's,  
No Knights o' the Sunne, nor Amadis de Gaule's,  
Primalions, and Pantagruel's, publique nothings;  
Abortives of the fabulous, darke cloyster,  
Sent out to poison courts, and infest manners:  
But great Achilles, Agememnons acts,  
Sage Nestors counsels, and Vlysses slights,  
Tydides fortitude, as Homer wrought them  
In his immortall phant'sie, for examples

<sup>7</sup> Baskervill, *English Elements in Jonson's Early Comedy*, p. 219. O. J. Campbell, following Baskervill, considers Puntarvolo a satirical picture of the "old nobility," *Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida*, p. 78.

Of the Heroick vertue. Or, as Virgil,  
 That master of the Epick poeme, limn'd  
 Pious Aeneas, his religious Prince,  
 Bearing his aged Parent on his shoulders,  
 Rapt from the flames of Troy, with his yong sonne!  
 And these he brought to practise, and to vse.<sup>8</sup>

But Lovel himself is far from being a Homeric hero; he is not even modeled on one. His ancestors are romantic; and there is more than a hint that he may be indebted to Sir Philip Sidney for some of his traits.

Lovel's speech accords well with the poetic theory of both Sidney and Jonson; the heroes of fiction are to serve as examples for the heroes of actual life. The choice of Homer's warriors and the belittling of the knights along with other dramatic references to the matter of chivalry (in *The Silent Woman* and *Eastward Ho!*) lead us to expect whole masses of satiric poetry on the foolishness of chivalry and romance; but the masses of satire do not materialize. There are few lines in the poems, aside from the "Execration," which match the lines in the plays. In "The Famous Voyage":

I sing the brave adventure of two wights,  
 Any pittie 'tis, I cannot call 'hem Knights:  
 One was; and he, for brawne, and braine, right able  
 To have been stiled of King Arthurs table.  
 The other was a Squire, of faire degree;  
 But, in the action, greater man then hee:  
 Who gave, to take at his returne from Hell,  
 His three for one. Now, lordlings, listen well.

Then there are the "Tempestuous Grandlings" of the "Speech according to Horace."

Let poore Nobilitie be vertuous: Wee,  
 Descended in a rope of Titles, be  
 From Guy, or Bevis, Arthur, or from whom  
 The Herald will. Our blood is now become  
 Past any need of vertue.

The edge here cuts not Arthur, Bevis, and Guy, but their ridiculous supposed descendants.

<sup>8</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, VI, 422.

Generally the knights in Ben's satiric epigrams are court knights, whose morals only are errant; and the Mile-End citizen-soldiers like Beaumont's Ralph in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* are simply used for contrast with England's heroes in "A Speech according to Horace," and are hardly more than names.

English chivalry was not all a matter of legend to men of Jonson's day, nor was it all a mere memory of past glory. Sir Philip Sidney's chivalry may not have been modeled precisely on *Amadis*, but it followed conventions just as definite as those in the tales of knighthood. The sonnet-writing courtier-soldier, the lover-warrior, was certainly far more an outgrowth of medieval romance than of classical epic; and however much of a classicist Sidney was, he thought in terms which would have been incomprehensible to either the Greeks or the Latins.

Sir Philip died in 1586, long before Jonson's poetic career began. Hence, there is no poem addressed directly to him, although his great shade walks in legendary splendor through the poems of the younger classicist. "Penshurst," primarily a praise of Sir Robert Sidney and his wife, mentions a tree "which of a nut was set, at his great birth, where all the Muses met." "To Elizabeth Countess of Rutland" (Epigram LXXIX) places Sir Philip very high on Parnassus:

That Poets are farre rarer births then Kings,  
Your noblest father prov'd; like whom, before,  
Or then, or since, about our Muses springs,  
Came not that soule exhausted so their store.

In the epistle to the same lady ("The Forrest," XII) Ben promised to sing of her:

not with tickling rimes,  
Or Common-places, filch'd, that take these times,  
But high, and noble matter, such as flies  
From braines entranc'd, and fill'd with extasies;  
Moods, which the god-like Sydney oft did prove,  
And your brave friend, and mine so well did love.

This promise to "sing high and aloof" (a promise frequently made, but luckily not always kept) appears in a work which praises the power of poetry as highly as any of his other numerous tributes to the Muse; and even discounting the fact that this poem and the epigram

above are addressed to Sidney's daughter, the praise attests real respect for Sir Philip. As sonneteer Sidney takes his place among the poets in "An Ode" ("Hellen, did Homer never see"):

Hath our great Sydney, Stella set,  
Where never Star shone brighter yet?

"An Epistle to Sir Edward Sacvile" contrasts Sidney with the man who "tarries by the Beast."

Men have beene great, but never good by chance,  
Or on the sudden. It were strange that he  
Who was this Morning such a one, should be  
Sydney e're night? or that did goe to bed  
Coriat, should rise the most sufficient head  
Of Christendome? And neither of these know  
Were the Rack offer'd them how they came so.

Sir William Sidney is reminded of *noblesse oblige* in the "Ode" ("The Forest," XIII):

Nor can a little of the common store,  
Of nobles vertue, shew in you;  
Your blood  
So good  
And great, must seek for new,  
And study more:  
Not weary, rest  
On what's deceast.  
For they, that swell  
With dust of ancestors, in graves but dwell.  
'Twill be exacted of your name, whose sonne,  
Whose nephew, whose grand-child you are.

Sir Philip, being the uncle, is here grouped with the less literary members of the Sidney family. He is praised, then, as English worthy and as poet meriting *imitation*. Both as man and writer Sidney was a product of the long tradition of courtly love traced by C. S. Lewis. However Ciceronian Castiglione's Courtier may be, he is a chivalric figure—and Sidney is the Courtier come to life. Hence, Ben's apparent hostility to chivalry cannot be complete.

In Jonson's lifetime British legend and British patriotism were closely associated. A very important reason for this association was



the supposed Tudor-Stuart descent from Arthur. The effect of this on the scholars, writers, and readers is too large to be treated here in all its aspects; Charles B. Millican, in *Spenser and the Table Round*, takes up Arthurian matter and contemporary attitudes toward it as they affected Spenser, Louis B. Wright considers the middle-class reader's interest in the legends, and Roberta Florence Brinckley traces the rise and fall of interest in Arthurian material from the accession of Henry VII, with particular emphasis on the seventeenth century.

Miss Brinckley points out an especial revival of enthusiasm in the reign of James I, when the prophecy of Merlin that Scotland and England would be united was considered fulfilled in the person of James, the descendant of Arthur. Among other things, she refers to Camden's anagram (Charles Iames Steuart: claims Arthurs Seate) as it appears in Ben Jonson's *Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers*.<sup>9</sup>

Although this work is included among the masques and entertainments, its dramatic action is so limited, and the devices and spectacle of the masque so little used that the piece is more akin to the poems than to the dramatic works. The whole device is strikingly similar to 'Gascoign's part of Queen Elizabeth's entertainment at Kenilworth, which Millican believes had an important influence on Spenser.<sup>10</sup> In Jonson's work Merlin is recalled by the Lady of the Lake and delivers a speech (in couplets) more than two hundred lines long, giving an account of the glories of the English worthies:

First, two brave Britaine Heroes, that were grac'd  
To fight their Saviours battailes, and did bring  
Destruction on the faithlesse; one a King,  
Richard, surnamed with the Lions heart.  
The other Edward, and the first, whose part  
(Then being but Prince) it was to lead those warres  
In the age after, but with better starres.

Other heroes are "that Mars of men, The black Prince Edward" and "the other thunder-bolt of warre, Harry the fift," a nearly complete history of whose reign was destroyed in the 1623 fire. Finally, after the defeat of the Armada, returns the peace of "The golden veine of Saturnes age."

<sup>9</sup> Brinckley, *Arthurian Legend in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 10; see also Camden, *Remains concerning Britain*, p. 188.

<sup>10</sup> Millican, *Spenser and the Table Round*, p. 4.

Henry but joyn'd the Roses, that ensign'd  
 Particular families, but this hath joyn'd  
 The Rose and Thistle, and in them combin'd  
 A Union, that shall never be declin'd.

Except that he includes a number of heroes who would not have been *personae gratae* to his own people, Merlin is simply performing the function of a bard as defined by Drayton in his *Heroicall Epistles*:

This berdh, as they call it in the British tongue, or as we more properly say Bard, or Bardus, be their poets, which keepe Records of Pedigrees and discents, and sing in Odes and measures to their Harps, after the old manner of the Lyrick Poets.<sup>11</sup>

The mere fact that Merlin introduces the heroes does not give more than a tinge of chivalric color to this patriotic genealogy of warriors. But when the bard finishes this speech, he beholds in a cave "Chevalry possess'd with sleep, dead as a Lethargy." He rouses her (chivalry is feminine) with the name of Meliadus (Prince Henry) and she speaks:

Breake, you rusty dores  
 That have been so long shut, and from the shores  
 Of all the world, come knight-hood like a flood  
 Upon these lists, to make the field, here, good,  
 And your own honors, that are now call'd forth  
 Against the wish of men to prove your worth.

Even if this is nothing more than a graceful compliment to the Prince, it shows no disposition to cast "the whole summe of errant Knight-hood" to the flames—true, this knighthood is not *errant*; but that is a quibble.

That Ben carried his interest in the bardic tradition beyond mere compliment is evidenced by his assuming the role of bard himself on occasion. In "Eupheme," for instance, "The Song of Her Descent" is

. . . utter'd by an antient bard,  
 Who claimes (of reverence) to be heard,  
 As comming with his Harpe, prepar'd  
 To chant her 'gree.

<sup>11</sup> Drayton, *Works*, ed. by Hebel, II, 212-13.

Evidently to Jonson, Drayton, and their readers the term "bard" did not have the connotation it has for us, who dub Homer, Shakespeare, or any other poet or verse writer "bard." To them, bards were ancient British poets or their Tudor or Stuart counterparts. Among the Tudors "Mary alone was without her Arthurian bard,"<sup>12</sup> according to Millican; and James might be said to have had one in Jonson. In the poem supposedly sent to Jonson with the requested copy of the Welsh grammar, James Howell gives another instance of the restricted use of the name:

This is the tounge, the Bards sung in of old,  
& Druyds their dark knowledg did unfold,  
Merlin in this his prophecies did vent,  
wch through the world of fame beare such extent  
This spoak that soñe of Mars, that Britain bold,  
Who first mongst Christian Worthies is enrolld.<sup>13</sup>

This brief piece brings together almost all the divergent elements in Jonson's "Speeches": bards, and druids, Merlin, and Arthur, who is a son of Mars and a Christian worthy. Jonson goes farther and brings in English kings and Chivalry in person.

The performance of the "antient bard" ("The Song of Her Descent") is but a brief fragment—not too brief in Herford's estimation; however, the last six of the extant eighteen lines probably indicate the trend of the unwritten, or lost (as the Folio states) lines. The piece begins with a somewhat stilted compliment to "Dame Venetia Digby, styl'd the Faire":

For Mind, and Body, the most excellent  
That ever Nature, or the later Ayre  
Gave two such Houses as Northumberland,  
And Stanley, to the which shee was Co-heire . . .  
Tell, testifie the grand  
Meeting of Graces, that so swell'd the flood  
Of vertues in her, as, in short, shee grew  
The wonder of her Sexe, and of your Blood.  
And tell thou, Alde-Legh, None can tell more true  
Thy Neeces line, then thou that gav'st thy Name  
Into the Kindred, whence thy Adam drew  
Meschines honour with the Cestrian fame

<sup>12</sup> Millican, *Spenser and the Table Round*, p. 52.

<sup>13</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, I, 259–60.

Of the first Lupus, to the Familie

By Ranulph . . .

*The rest of this Song is lost.*

Herford dismisses this fragment in two sentences:

The first and second "pieces" are of little more than pathological interest. The *terza rima* of the latter, used before Jonson by Wyat and Surrey, Sidney and Daniel, has rarely been so completely denuded of charm and grace.<sup>14</sup>

Part of the second sentence seems to be in answer to Swinburne's comment.

The first of these is chiefly remarkable for a singular Scotticism—'where Seraphim *take tent* of ordering all'; the fragment of the second, as an early attempt—I know not whether it be the earliest—to introduce the *terza rima* into English verse.<sup>15</sup>

Hugh Holland's *Pancharis*, for which Ben wrote his "Ode Allegorike," is also in *terza rima*, and may well have been partially responsible for Jonson's use of the meter.

Of some interest, perhaps not altogether pathological, is the appearance of Ranulph, who barely got into the poem. It is necessary to quote Newdigate's glossary on the heroes in the last few lines of the poem, since I wish to propose a slightly different explanation from his.

Alde-legh, Adam d', ancestor of the Stanleys. Lupus, 'the wolf,' the name given to Hugh of Avranches, 2nd Earl of Chester (d. 1101), ancestor of the Stanleys.

Meschine, *sc.* Ranulph le Meschin ('The Young') (d. *c.* 1129), nephew to Hugh Lupus, *q.v.*, and Ranulph, 4th, 5th and 7th earls of Chester, ancestors of the Stanleys.<sup>16</sup>

*The Dictionary of National Biography* gives three representatives of the family Alde-legh, Audley, Aldithel, or Alditheley (II, 249).

Henry de (d. 1246), a royalist baron, was son of Adam de Alditheley, who held Alditheley (Staff.) from the Verdens in 1186. . . . He began his career as constable to Hugh de Lacy (whose wife was a Verdon) when Earl of Ulster, and, on Hugh's disgrace (1214), attached himself to Ranulph, the great Royalist Earl of Chester, and was rewarded by

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 382.

<sup>15</sup> Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 110.

<sup>16</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, pp. 388, 405-6, 412.

the crown with a forfeited estate . . . James de, son and heir of Henry de: Fought in Welsh marches with Prince Edward.

Adam, then, who drew Meshine's honor and Lupus's Cestrian fame to the family of Alde-legh, served under the Ranulph who was earl from 1181 to 1232. This Ranulph is probably the one of whom Sloth in *Piers Plowman* says "I can rymes of Robyn hood and Randolf erle of Chester": "the latter [Ranulph] is more likely to be meant, both as being more famous and later in date; besides which, he was once released from prison *by a rabble of minstrels*; *Ritson's Ancient Songs*."<sup>17</sup> Ritson's note is additionally interesting, since he gives as one of his authorities for the story of Ranulph and the rabble of minstrels Camden's *Britannia*: "This family . . . by an old custom, hath a particular authority over all *pipers, fiddlers, and harpers* of this county, ever since one R. Dutton, with a rabble of such men, rescued Ranulph, the last earl of Chester."<sup>18</sup> Although it is extremely doubtful that Ben would have interrupted his genealogy to tell this story, he must have heard it from Camden himself, to whom he evidently owed much more than a reading knowledge of Latin.

The fragmentary *Fall of Mortimer* shows that Ben intended a dramatic excursion into the field of English chronicle history; but the brevity of that fragment and the loss of the annals of the reign of Henry V leave only the *Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers* and scattered references in the poems to show his interest in the romantic past of his country that inspired so much of Shakespeare's and Drayton's (not to mention Spenser's) work.

In "A Speech according to Horace" the modern soldiers are contrasted with the old English warriors:

In the stead of bold  
Beauchamps, and Nevills, Cliffords, Audley's old;  
Insert thy Hodges, and those newer men,  
As Stiles, Dike, Ditchfield, Millar, Crips, and Fen:  
That keepe the warre, though now't be growne more tame,  
Alive yet, in the noise.

A. M. Clark, in a discussion of the possible authorship of *The Bold Beauchamps* (attributed to Thomas Heywood), quotes a number

<sup>17</sup> Langland, *The Vision of Will concerning Piers the Plowman*, ed. by Skeat, p. 142.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Ritson, *Ancient Songs*, I, vii, xlv.

of references to "bould Beacham," and "Bold Beauchamps." Most appropriate in relation to Jonson are those in *A Mad World, My Masters* (1606), Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.<sup>19</sup> Newdigate calls attention to the appearance of all four of Jonson's heroes in Froissart.<sup>20</sup> They also appear in Drayton's *Baron's Wars* and *Heroicall Epistles*.

More humble in literary renown, but probably closer to Jonson personally than Drayton, Hugh Holland also has a brief passage similar to theirs.

My bolder ditty, that so longs to boast  
Those old Heroes, crown'd with holie bayes,  
That under him did use to leade his hoste;  
Beauforts, Veres, Nevills, Talbots, Cliffords, Grayes.<sup>21</sup>

One can hardly imagine a less appropriate setting for these rugged heroes than Holland's romantic, mythological, and allegorical book *Pancharis*. His dragging them in by the heels requires at least a tentative hypothesis. He and Ben were both students of Camden's; Holland wrote a dedicatory poem in Latin to Camden and printed it in *Pancharis*;<sup>22</sup> Camden was an ardent student of the history of his native country. Although no certain conclusion can be drawn without further evidence, a logical guess is that Camden inoculated his students with some of his own enthusiasm for native history.

Much of Ben's meed of praise is given to the Cary's, Veres, and Radcliffes of his own day:

#### TO SIR HENRY CARY

That neither fame, nor love might wanting be  
To greatnesse, Cary, I sing that, and thee.  
Whose House, if it no other honour had,  
In onely thee, might be both great, and glad.  
Who, to upbraid the sloth of this our time,

<sup>19</sup> Clark, *Thomas Heywood*, pp. 13-15, 211.

<sup>20</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, pp. 389-90, 394, 407.

<sup>21</sup> Holland, *Pancharis*, ed. by J. Payne Collier, p. 35. Holland's chief claim to what meager fame he has rests on the fact that he and Ben were the only contributors of commendatory poems to the First Folio of Shakespeare—another link between the fellow alumni. Camden, however, included both his pupils in his list of worthy contemporary authors (*Remains concerning Britain*, p. 344), which also includes Sidney, Spenser, Owen, Daniel, Campion, Drayton, Chapman, Marston, and Shakespeare.

<sup>22</sup> Holland, *Pancharis*, ed. by Collier, pp. 5-6.

Durst valour make, almost, but not a crime.  
 Which deed I know not, whether were more high,  
 Or thou more happie, it to justifie  
 Against thy fortune: when no foe, that day,  
 Could conquer thee, but chance, who did betray.  
 Love thy great losse, which a renowne hath wonne,  
 To live when Broek not stands, nor Roor doth runne.  
 Love honours, which of best example bee,  
 When they cost dearest, and are done most free,  
 Though every fortitude deserves applause,  
 It may be much, or little, in the cause.  
 Hee's valiant'st, that dares fight, and not for pay;  
 That vertuous is, when the reward's away.

This sounds like a complaint against the encroachment of commercialism even on warfare, a nostalgia for knighthood.

A somewhat similar use of war as an antidote to the corruption, vanity, and sloth of the court is recommended in "An Epistle to a Friend":

These take, and now goe seeke thy peace in Warre,  
 Who falls for love of God, shall rise a Starre.

But this is not Ben's customary poetic attitude; the reign of James was likened so often to the golden age of Augustus that it was wise to address Vulcan with:

Would you had kept your Forge, at Aetna still  
 And there made Swords, Bills, Glaves, and Armes your fill.

. . .

Or fixt in the Low-Countrey's, where you might  
 On both sides doe your mischiefes with delight;  
 Blow up, and ruine, myne, and countermyne,  
 Make your Petards, and Granats, all your fine  
 Engines of Murder, and receive the praise  
 Of massacring Man-kind so many wayes.  
 We aske your absence here, we all love peace,  
 And pray the fruites thereof, and the increase;  
 So doth the King, and most of the Kings men  
 That have good places . . .

As in this passage most of Jonson's war imagery is less romantic and more practical than Sidney's. Kenneth Myrick notes that Sir Philip's interest lies more in single combat than in technical details

of warfare. Ben, though careful to keep a somewhat contemptuous attitude toward the by-products of Vulcan's art (including guns, with their repulsive origin), manages to bring in his first-hand knowledge of contemporary warfare. For instance, though "An Epistle Mendicant" (1631) is allegory in the true "morality" fashion, the siege in it is brought up to date.

MY LORD;

Poore wretched states, prest by extremeties  
Are faine to seeke for succours, and supplies,  
Of Princes aides, or good mens Charities.

Disease, the Enemie, and his Engineeres  
Want, with the rest of his conceal'd compeeres,  
Have cast a trench about mee, now five yeares.

And made those strong approaches, by False braies,  
Reduicts, Halfe-moones, Horne-workes, & such close wayes,  
The Muse not peepes out, one of hundred dayes.

But lies block'd up, and straightned, narrow'd in,  
Fixed to the bed, and boords, unlike to win  
Health, or scarce breath, as she had never bin.

Unlesse some saving-Honour of the Crowne,  
Dare think it, to relieve, no lesse renowne,  
A Bed-rid Wit, then a besieged Towne.

But war is only half the duty of the true knight; the other half is love—courtly love. Though Jonson made mild fun of courtly love in *The New Inn*, he did not let such a large and important tradition pass without paying it some homage. We have already seen the brief tribute which Jonson paid to Sidney and his Stella; and in the epigram to Sidney's fourth daughter Ben assumes the tone, if not the meter, of the sonneteer:

I must beleeeve some miracles still bee,  
When Sydnyes name I heare, or face I see:  
For Cupid, who (at first) tooke vaine delight,  
In meere out-formes, untill he lost his sight,  
Hath chang'd his soule, and made his object you:  
Where finding so much beauty met with vertue,  
He hath not only gain'd himselfe his eyes,  
But, in your love, made all his servants wise.



Mrs. McEuen sees in this graceful compliment indebtedness to Anacreon;<sup>23</sup> but Wheeler says that the blindness of Cupid, to which Jonson refers seventeen times according to his list, is "an unclassical notion." He continues: "As evidence that Cupid's blindness was presented before the Elizabethan period, Root points to Chaucer's *House of Fame*, 138, etc."<sup>24</sup> However, any reader of Floyd A. Spencer's article "The Literary Lineage of Cupid"<sup>25</sup> may well feel that there is hardly any notion about the love god that can be called "unclassical." Among the numerous references to Cupid's, or rather Eros's, properties, he gives two Greek sources for blindness: Theocritus and an Orphic fragment. The scarcity of references to blindness as an attribute of the love god is, however, a definite indication that emphasis on the attribute is not classical. More than likely, the blindness of Cupid in English literature can be traced to the *Romance of the Rose*.

Lisle John divides the Cupids of the sonneteers into two groups: those drawn on Ovidian models, and those drawn on Anacreontic models. Neither the Ovidian nor the Anacreontic Cupid is blind. The two types differ in that the Ovidian is a tyrannical young man, and the Anacreontic is a mischievous child; often sonneteers combine the two and make a vindictive, tyrannical child. The former (Ovidian) Cupid, as modified by the poets of Provence, became

the composite figure of French poetry of the Middle Ages which portrayed love as a tall young man who is placed in the setting of a feudal court and who possessed at once all the tyrannical powers of a feudal overlord and of the classical god. The epitome of this composite figure is the blind young god of the *Romance of the Rose*, who looked like an angel.<sup>26</sup>

This feudal conception Lisle John finds in "phrases such as Sidney's 'my lord Love.'" <sup>27</sup> Jonson's groom in "Let me be what I am" is compared with those "Wrung on the Withers, by Lord Loves despite." In general, however, Jonson belongs more to the Anacreontic tradition. At any rate, his Cupid is usually a child.

Not every reference to Cupid sends a poet to the classics, and when the tiny god appears, as he does in the epigram "To Mrs. Philip Syd-

<sup>23</sup> McEuen, *Classical Influence on the Tribe of Ben*, p. 211.

<sup>24</sup> Wheeler, *Classical Mythology in . . . Ben Jonson*, p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> Spencer, "The Literary Lineage of Cupid," *The Classical Weekly*, XXV (1932), 121-44.

<sup>26</sup> John, *The Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences*, p. 41.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

ney," regaining his eyesight and making his servants wise in the lady's love, there is more than a suspicion that the Elizabethan sonnets rather than the Greeks and Romans are responsible.

One of the pillars of Jonson's anti-Petrarchan reputation is his refusal—it amounts to that—to write a sonnet sequence. In the present day, when even Shakespeare's sonnets are not considered by every scholar to be a single sequence, we are justified in casting our eyes over Jonson's poetry to assemble scattered Petrarchan material.

At the beginning of such a survey one notices a scarcity of sonnets. Herford lists only five, omitting mention of the Court Prologue to *The Staple of News*.<sup>28</sup> Six sonnets (three English, three Italian) are a scanty crop for an Elizabethan poet. Of the six, two are commendatory poems prefixed to contemporary volumes (Nicholas Breton's *Melancholike Humours* and Thomas Wright's *Passions of the Minde in General*), one is a prologue, and two are epigrams. The epigrams show more clearly than a volume of criticism why Ben has not been ranked with the sonneteers of love; in their way, they are as free from the restrictions of courtly love as Milton's are:

#### ON POET-APE (EPIGRAM LVI)

Poore Poet-Ape, that would be thought our chiefe,  
 Whose Works are eene the fripperie of wit,  
 From brocage is become so bold a theefe,  
 As we, the rob'd, leave rage, and pitie it.  
 At first he made low shifts, would pick and gleane,  
 Buy the reversion of old Playes; now growne  
 To'a little wealth, and credit in the Scene,  
 He takes up all, makes each mans wit his owne.  
 And, told of this, he slights it. Tut, such crimes  
 The sluggish gaping auditor deuoures;  
 He markes not whose 'twas first: and after-times  
 May judge it to be his, as well as ours.  
 Foole, as if halfe eyes will not know a fleece  
 From locks of wooll, or shreds from the whole peece?

#### AN EPIGRAM

##### *To the House-hold*

What can the cause be, when the K. hath given  
 His Poët Sack, the House-hold will not pay?

<sup>28</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 392-93.

Are they so scanted in their store? or driven  
 For want of knowing the Poët, to say him nay?  
 Well, they should know him, would the K. but grant  
 His Poët leave to sing his House-hold true;  
 Hee'd frame such ditties of their store, and want,  
 Would make the very Greene-cloth to looke blew:  
 And rather wish, in their expence of Sack,  
 So, the allowance from the King to use,  
 As the old Bard, should no Canary lack,  
 'T were better spare a Butt, then spill his Muse.  
 For in the Genius of a Poëts Verse,  
 The Kings fame lives. Go now, denie his teirce.

The latter is conventional form adapted to personal purposes with a vengeance.

Only one of the six sonnets follows the customary path. It is addressed to Sir Philip Sidney's niece (the Sidney family seems to go with the sonnet convention):

#### A SONNET

*To the Noble Lady, the Lady Mary Wroth*

I that have been a lover, and could shew it,  
 Though not in these, in rithmes not wholly dumbe,  
 Since I exscribe your Sonnets, am become  
 A better lover, and much better Poët.  
 Nor is my Muse, or I asham'd to owe it,  
 To those true numerous Graces; whereof some,  
 But charme the Senses, others over-come  
 Both braines and hearts; and mine now best doe know it:  
 For in your verse all Cupids Armorie,  
 His flames, his shafts, his Quiver, and his Bow,  
 His very eyes are yours to overthrow.  
 But then his Mothers sweets you so apply,  
 Her joyes, her smiles, her loves, as readers take  
 For Venus Ceston, every line you make.

Even this sonnet departs from the beaten path in praising the lady's poetry rather than her person; but with very few and very minor changes it could be inserted in many of the cycles.

If we leave the sonnet form out of consideration, we can discern much greater kinship of Jonson's attitudes with those of writers on courtly love. One reason for underestimating Jonson's homage to Petrarchism is the lack of mystery in the poems which use Petrarchan

conventions. They are usually quite frankly addressed to some noble patroness. Indeed, so many different patronesses are addressed that the critics feel no obligation to discover a dark lady to explain the passages. "Charis," says Newdigate, "has not yet been identified."<sup>29</sup> If Ben had not revealed the names of so many of the noble ladies to whom he expressed his Platonic admiration, Charis would almost certainly have been identified with one or probably with several of them. There would have been grounds for a scholars' war, and his love poetry or semi-love poetry would have gained far more attention.

"Charis," however, serves as a reminder that some of the romantic verse appears without a flattered patroness. One of the "ten lyric pieces" which make up "A Celebration of Charis" led Herford to the following praise:

It is a sumptuous and glowing romantic hymn heavy with perfume and of a lingering sonorous music; interposed amid a succession of blithe anacreontics, as nearly Greek in their buoyant temper and their crisp and vivacious movement as Jonson ever achieved.<sup>30</sup>

The "glowing romantic hymn" is a song from a play (*The Devil Is an Ass*) enlarged and fitted into new surroundings, another example of Jonson's willingness to use his old jewels in new settings. More important here are the Anacreontics. The second lyric of the series is the most amusing, as well as the most pertinent in a study of love conventions; after beholding the lady, the poet calls Cupid.

Love, if thou wilt ever see  
 Marke of glorie, come with me;  
 Where's thy Quiver? bend thy Bow:  
 Here's a shaft, thou art to slow!  
 And (withall) I did untie  
 Every Cloud about his eye;  
 But, he had not gain'd his sight  
 Sooner, then he lost his might,  
 Or his courage; for away  
 Strait hee ran, and durst not stay,  
 Letting Bow and Arrow fall, . . .  
 I foole-hardie, there up tooke

<sup>29</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, p. 355.

<sup>30</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 387-88.

Both the Arrow he had quit,  
 And the Bow: which thought to hit  
 This my object. But she threw  
 Such a Lightning (as I drew)  
 At my face, that tooke my sight,  
 And my motion from me quite;  
 So that there, I stood a stone,  
 Mock'd of all: and call'd of one  
 (Which with grieve and wrath I heard)  
 Cupids Statue with a Beard,  
 Or else one that plaid his Ape,  
 In a Hercules-his shape.

The third lyric continues the adventure; Charis takes the bow and arrow from Ben (he is called by his name in the ninth lyric), returns them to Cupid, who shoots the poet in the heart.

Herford has pointed out that the fourth and seventh lyrics "in form and manner, stand apart from the rest."<sup>31</sup> In the light of this statement I wish to propose another of Ben's lyrics as the fourth piece in "Charis." The reason for this substitution may be found in the fifth piece, a dialogue between Ben and Cupid. The latter speaks:

Sure, said he, if I have Braine,  
 This here sung, can be no other  
 By description, but my Mother!  
 So hath Homer prais'd her haire;  
 So, Anacreon drawne the Ayre  
 Of her face, and made to rise  
 Just about her sparkling eyes,  
 Both her Browes, bent like my Bow.  
 By her looks I doe her know,  
 Which you call my Shafts. And see!  
 Such my Mothers blushes be,  
 As the Bath your verse discloses  
 In her cheekes, of Milke, and Roses;  
 Such as oft I wanton in?  
 And, above her even chin,  
 Have you plac'd the banke of kisses,  
 Where you say, men gather blisses.

The poem so closely described by Cupid as almost to be quoted word for word is "An Elegie" ("By those bright Eyes").

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 388.

By those bright Eyes, at whose immortall fires  
 Love lights his torches to inflame desires;  
 By that fair Stand, your forehead, whence he bends  
 His double Bow, and round his Arrowes sends;  
 By that tall Grove your haire; whose globy rings  
 He flying curls, and crispeth, with his wings.  
 By those pure bathes your either cheeke discloses,  
 Where he doth steepe himselfe in Milke and Roses;  
 And lastly by your lips, the banke of kisses,  
 Where men at once may plant, and gather blisses:  
 Tell me (my lov'd Friend) doe you love or no?

. . .

I'll therefore aske no more, but bid you love;  
 And so that either may example prove  
 Unto the other; and live patternes, how  
 Others, in time may love, as we doe now . . .  
 You have a Husband is the just excuse  
 Of all that can be done him.

If this is the fourth lyric, it is answered in the fifth. The "lov'd Friend" (the "sweet friend" of Aucassin and his kindred?) evidently answered "No," for the poet's answer to Cupid is:

I confesse all, I replide,  
 And the Glasse hangs by her side,  
 And the Girdle 'bout her waste,  
 All is Venus: save unchaste.

There is little or no doubt that these poems have their roots in Anacreon, Ovid, Tibullus, Martial, and Propertius; but to deny that they are also Elizabethan would be to set up a thesis difficult or impossible to prove. They are in many ways similar to the sonnet sequences and the earlier poems of courtly love: the indifferent mistress, the armed Cupid (blind in the second lyric), who lights his torches from the lady's flaming eyes and shoots his arrows from her hair or her brows, the pleading lover (for his age Ben had Gower as well as Anacreon for precedents—not to mention "That time of year thou mayst in me behold").<sup>32</sup> Even the suggested adultery in the elegy, if it is connected with "Charis," is one of the absolute rules of courtly love before their moderation by the author of "The King's Quair" and Spen-

<sup>32</sup> John, *The Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences*, *passim*.

ser.<sup>33</sup> Spenser's is the only Elizabethan sonnet sequence addressed to the poet's own wife.

The fact that most or all of these conventions and allusions can be traced to classical sources and that Ben was aware of those sources does not alter the fact that he was not the first to bring them together. To Petrarch's motifs the Pleiade poets added the Anacreontic Cupid. The Elizabethans assimilated Petrarch and Anacreon. Ben may have checked the references against the classics, but he did not sweep away the changes of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Often he heightens the image from a classical poet in keeping with Elizabethan extravagance.

In order to justify consideration here of the four elegies whose authorship is disputed, the evidence concerning their authenticity must be reviewed. One of the four appeared in the edition of Donne's poems printed in 1633. Swinburne felt inclined to take away from Jonson not only the one, but also the three others,<sup>34</sup> one preceding and two following the "Expostulation," as it is called in the works of Donne. Herford concurred,

as all four are unmistakably by the same hand, and strangely recall Donne's strikingly individual manner, while they have no parallel in Jonson, his claim to them, published as they were in the loose, ill-edited collection of the *Underwoods*, and after his death, cannot be asserted with any confidence, and must in our view be abandoned. . . . Here surely we have a glimpse of the mystic passion, shot with splendour and with gloom, which womanhood provoked in the genius of Donne.<sup>35</sup>

Newdigate replies:

But Jonson's muse was a thing changeful and fickle as his conception of womanhood, which was also Donne's. In its flight it could be splendid and passionate as well as wayward and trifling; and we should be chary of setting arbitrary limitations either to its range or to its power. In the Expostulation there are echoes of Catullus, such as abound in Jonson but are rare in Donne. Lastly, the authority of Digby's folio, which Herford, like Whalley and Gifford, unduly depreciates, must not be lightly set aside.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, pp. 237, 298.

<sup>34</sup> Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 106.

<sup>35</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 384.

<sup>36</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, pp. xi-xii. W. D. Briggs, who shares Newdigate's respect for the 1640 Folio, also believes that all four poems are Jonson's, "Studies in Ben Jonson," *Anglia*, XXXIX (1915), pp. 42-43.

Naturally, since the assumption has been that the four are "unmistakably by the same hand," the battle has had to center around the "Expostulation" ("To make the Doubt cleare that no Woman's true"). Newdigate, following J. B. Emperor's Catullian theory,<sup>37</sup> believes that the poem printed in Donne's works is Jonson's; Herford, as quoted, believed the contrary. However, a third theory has been advanced; Evelyn Simpson, by no means convinced that the four are by the same hand, points out that the three elegies ascribed to Jonson by external evidence have numerous instances of uses of medieval conventions not found in any of Donne's undoubted works. She feels that both external and internal evidence support belief in Jonson's authorship of the three elegies included with the "Expostulation."<sup>38</sup> Since Mrs. Simpson is now an editor of the Oxford *Ben Jonson*, it is safe to assume that her article will have considerable weight in the forthcoming volume of the poems in that edition. With this official sanction it is safe to draw conclusions from at least three of the four elegies with some assurance that Jonson has a recognized claim to them.

The first ("Tis true, I'm broke") expresses the repentance of the lover for a minor fault, and pleads for "mercie."

Your forme shines here, here fixed in my heart;  
I may dilate my selfe, but not depart.  
Others by common Stars their courses run:  
When I see you, then I doe see my Sun;  
Till then 'tis all but darknesse, that I have;  
Rather then want your light, I wish a grave.

The sonnets on the courses steered by the star of the beloved are headed in England by Wyatt's "My Galley Charged with Forgetfulness"; the poet in the elegy has simply compressed and intensified the image. . . . This image is no more foreign to Jonson's poetry than the opening lines of the fifth lyric in "Charis":

Noblest Charis, you that are  
Both my fortune, and my Starre!  
And doe governe more my blood,  
Then the various Moone the flood!

<sup>37</sup> Newdigate quotes as reference: Emperor, J. B., "The Catullian Influence in English Lyric Poetry, c. 1600-1650," in *The University of Missouri Studies*, July 1, 1928.

<sup>38</sup> Simpson, "Jonson and Donne," *Review of English Studies*, XV (1939), 274 ff.



The third of the elegies ("That Love's a bitter sweet") is concerned chiefly with secrecy. Partly to show this, partly for its imagery, the latter half of the poem is quoted:

No Masters [Mistress(?)] no, the open merrie Man  
 Moves like a sprightly River, and yet can  
 Keepe secret in his Channels what he breeds  
 'Bove all your standing waters, choak'd with weedes.  
 They looke at best like Creame-bowles, and you soone  
 Shall find their depth: they're sounded with a spoone.  
 They may say Grace, and for Loves Chaplaines passe;  
 But the grave Lover ever was an Asse;  
 Is fix'd upon one leg, and dares not come  
 Out with the other, for hee's still at home;  
 Like the dull wearied Crane that (come on land)  
 Doth while he keepes his watch, betray his stand;  
 Where he that knowes will like a Lapwing flie  
 Farre from the Nest, and so himself belie.  
 To others, as he will deserve the Trust  
 Due to that one, that doth believe him just.  
 And such your Servant is, who vowes to keepe  
 The Jewell of your name, as close as sleepe  
 Can lock the Sense up, or the heart a thought,  
 And never be by time, or folly brought,  
 Weaknesse of braine, or any charme of Wine,  
 The sinne of Boast, or other countermin  
 (Made to blow up loves secrets) to discover  
 That Article, may not become your lover:  
 Which in assurance to your brest I tell,  
 If I had writ no word, but Deare, farewell.

The importance of secrecy in courtly love is too well known to need comment; obviously adulterous love must be secret. However, the courtly lovers had an elaborate and ritualistic secrecy far beyond mere skulking concealment.

The appearance of the "Creame-bowle" image in the *Discoveries*, "sounded" there with a finger instead of a spoon, is an additional point to support Jonson's authorship. Also the ellipsis in "That Article [which] may not become your lover" appears so frequently in his poetry that it is almost a mannerism.

The fourth of the elegies ("Since you must goe") is a typical lovers' parting with extravagant protestations:

It is as if a night should shade noone-day,  
 Or that the Sun was here, but forc't away;  
 And we were left under that Hemisphere,  
 Where we must feele it Darke for halfe a yeare.

Such a parting would have begotten a sonnet by most of the Elizabethan literary lovers, perhaps with the same imagery.

In the elegies the lover is not described. In "Charis" we are told that he is bearded and is built like Hercules also that his name is Ben; but there is hardly ground for autobiographical theories. In several of the pieces addressed to his patronesses in semi-romantic tones, Ben appears in his own person. For instance, in the "Epistle, To My Lady Covell," although there is some dallying with courtly conventions ("Servant," etc.) the "humour" Ben Jonson is speaking in person:

You won not Verses, Madam, you won mee . . .  
 So you have gain'd a Servant, and a Muse:  
 The first of which I feare, you will refuse;  
 And you may justly, being a tardie cold,  
 Unprofitable Chattell, fat and old,  
 Laden with Bellie, and doth hardly approach  
 His friends, but to breake Chaires, or cracke a Coach.  
 His weight is twenty Stone within two pound . . .  
 By this, although you fancie not the man  
 Accept his Muse . . .

Naturally, this *Servant* would make few feminine hearts palpitate; and naturally if this lover is to be carried over into every love poem by Jonson, even scholars will prefer to substitute Donne, who was a handsome man even in his winding sheet. But this lover is not necessarily the speaker in the other poems, and even if he were, they would show no less interest in certain literary traditions.

Two compliments to patronesses show important use of love conventions. The first, "To His Lady, Then Mrs. Cary," is a playful adaptation of mythology:

Retyr'd, with purpose your faire worth to praise,  
 'Mongst Hampton shades, & Phoebus grove of bayes,  
 I pluck'd a branch; the jealous god did frowne,  
 And bade me lay th'usurped laurell down:  
 Said I wrong'd him, and (which was more) his Love.  
 I answer'd, Daphne now no paine can prove.

Phoebus replyed. Bold head, it is not shee:  
Cary my love is, Daphne but my tree.

The second, "On Lucy Countesse of Bedford," is almost a sonnet (indeed, Marston entitled a poem in exactly the same metrical form a sonnet), having four quatrains and a couplet instead of three. Let us drop the fourth quatrain, which is perhaps the most Jonsonian in a personal sense, giving the lady a "learned, and a manly soule," and which is the only part of the poem quoted in the Oxford *Jonson*:

This morning, timely rapt with holy fire,  
I thought to forme unto my zealous Muse,  
What kinde of creature I could most desire,  
To honor, serve, and love; as Poets use.  
I meant to make her faire, and free, and wise,  
Of greatest blood, and yet more good than great;  
I meant the day-starre should not brighter rise,  
Nor lend like influence from his lucent seat.  
I meant she should be curteous, facile, sweet,  
Hating that solemne vice of Greatnesse, pride;  
I meant each softest vertue, there should meet,  
Fit in that softer bosome to reside.

. . .

Such when I meant to faine, and wish'd to see,  
My Muse bade, Bedford write, and that was shee.

With the quatrain omitted and Stella or some other sonnet name substituted for "Bedford," this poem would not be out of place in any sonnet sequence of the period. My case is not weakened by the necessity of altering the poem, since padlocking Jonson in any particular group of writers is not my purpose. What I do wish to do is to show that he was interested in materials and traditions which are customarily overlooked in criticisms of his poetry. Of course, he added something of his own to the sonnet tradition when he followed it, just as he added something to the classical tradition when he followed it. He was a poet, not only a Petrarchist or an anti-Petrarchist (perhaps it would be better to say a Petrarchist *and* an anti-Petrarchist), just as surely as he was a satirist, not only a misogynist or a misanthrope.

C. S. Lewis points out that the author of "The Kingis Quair" and

Spenser carried courtly or romantic love into marriage, which in the original conventions was the sworn enemy of love.<sup>39</sup> Jonson follows them, or more probably just Spenser, in his celebration of happy marriages like Sir Robert Sidney's and Sir Kenelm Digby's, also in his epithalamia—fathered, perhaps, by Catullus, but surely god-fathered by Spenser. "The Epithalamion; or, a Song: Celebrating the Nuptials of that Noble Gentleman, Mr. Hierome Weston" is modeled on Spenser's "Prothalamion" rather than his "Epithalamion." A few stanzas will serve to show both the kinship and the poetry.

It is the kindly Season of the time,  
 The Month of youth, which calls all Creatures forth  
 To doe their Offices in Natures Chime,  
 And celebrate (perfection at the worth)  
 Mariage, the end of life,  
 That holy strife,  
 And the allowed warre:  
 Through which not only we, but all our *Species* are.

. . .

See, how she paceth forth in Virgin-white  
 Like what she is, the Daughter of a Duke,  
 And Sister: darting forth a dazling light  
 On all that come her Simplesse to rebuke!  
 Her tresses trim her back,  
 As she did lack  
 Nought of a Maiden Queene,  
 With Modestie so crown'd, and Adoration scene.

. . .

See, how with Roses, and with Lillies shine,  
 (Lillies and Roses, Flowers of either Sexe)  
 The bright Brides paths, embelish'd more then thine  
 With light of love, this Paire doth intertexe!  
 Stay, see the Virgins sow,  
 (Where she shall goe)  
 The Emblemes of their way.  
 O, now thou smil'st, faire Sun, and shin'st, as thou wouldst stay!

. . .

Force from the Phoenix then, no raritie  
 Of Sex, to rob the Creature; but from Man  
 The king of Creatures; take his paritie  
 With Angels, Muse, to speake these.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, p. 298.

The Maiden Queene in the second stanza quoted could hardly be other than Spenser's Gloriana, who, though Elizabeth was dead when this "Epithalamion" was written, had an earthly immortality as a poetic convention. The Christian and moral tone suggested in the last stanza above is stronger in the latter part of the poem, culminating as follows:

Th'Ignoble never liv'd, they were a-while  
 Like Swine, or other Cattell here on earth:  
 Their names are not recorded on the File  
 Of Life, that fall so; Christians know their birth.  
 Alone, and such a race,  
 We pray may grace,  
 Your fruitfull spreading Vine,  
 But dare, not aske our wish in Language *fescennine*:

Yet, as we may, we will, with chaste desires,  
 (The holy perfumes of the Mariage bed.)  
 Be kept alive, those Sweet, and Sacred fires  
 Of Love betweene you, and your Lovely-head:  
 That when you both are old,  
 You find no cold  
 There; but, renewed, say,  
 (After the last child borne;) This is our wedding day.

The final three stanzas wish for the bride and groom a numerous progeny and usher the young couple into the bridal chamber. Perhaps these stanzas are responsible for Herford's complaint that marriage is stripped of romance in the poem.

The pregnant and close-packed meditation of which he was master was not stirred by a theme for which at bottom he cared less perhaps than any other poet of the day. The gracious fancy which had fashioned the finest wedding Masques in our literature may still have been at his bidding. But it did little to save the Weston wedding ode from some of the worst faults of the genre. . . . The last vestige of romance is stripped from the solemnities of marriage. . . . In general the style is dignified, even stately; but without charm.<sup>40</sup>

This criticism contains a seeming paradox: Jonson cared less for the theme of marriage than any other poet of his day, yet wrote the finest wedding masques in our literature. Even as early as Dekker's *Satiromastix*, he had gained some reputation as a writer of epithala-

mia; otherwise much of Dekker's comedy would be extremely flat. Two of the wedding masques contain epithalamia. Whatever lack of success attended his efforts, Jonson would hardly have expended so much energy on a theme which did not stir him. Particularly indicative of an interest in marriage as a theme is the inclusion in "*Hymenæi*" of an epithalamion fifteen stanzas long, of which only one stanza was sung at the performance of the masque. In his note Ben says that he does "heartily forgive their ignorance whom it chanceth not to please."

"The Barriers," an epilogue following *Hymenæi*, contains Jonson's finest expression on marriage and goes well along the road that Spenser opened up. The piece is in the form of a debate between Truth and Opinion, the former defending marriage, the latter virginity. Truth's defense:

The golden tree of Marriage began  
 In Paradise, and bore the fruit of man;  
 On whose sweet branches Angels sate, and sung;  
 And from whose firme root all Societie sprung.  
 Love (whose strong vertue wrapt heav'ns soule in earth,  
 And made a woman glory in his birth)  
 In Marriage, opens his inflamed brest;  
 And, lest in him Nature should stifled rest,  
 His geniall fire above the world he darts;  
 Which lips with lips combines, and hearts with hearts.  
 Marriage loves object is; at whose bright eyes  
 He lights his torches, and call's them his Skies.  
 For her, he wings his shoulders; and doth flie  
 To her white bosome, as his sanctuary:  
 In which no lustfull finger can prophane him,  
 Nor any earth, with black eclipses wane him.  
 She makes him smile in sorrowes, and doth stand  
 Twixt him, and all wants, with her silver hand.  
 In her soft locks, his tender feet are tide;  
 And in his fetters he takes worthy pride.

This is in the noblest (that is, the Spenserian) tradition of the allegory of love. Ben seems to me to have gone even farther than Spenser in romanticizing marriage. Here is the Cupid lighting his torches from the Lady's eyes and tangling his feet in her soft locks, flying to her white bosom for sanctuary; but the Lady is Marriage ("Marriage

loves object is!" Shades of the courtly lovers!); marriage is compared to a golden tree in Paradise with angels singing in its branches, and Love is the Love "whose strong vertue wrapt heavn's soule in earth, and made a woman glory in his birth." This can be interpreted only as Christian allegory. Catullus and Ovid are far away, and so is Andreas Capellanus.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Master Surveyor*

INIGO JONES, the King's Surveyor, and Ben Jonson, his partner in the creation of masques, are not so inseparably linked as are Beaumont and Fletcher or Gilbert and Sullivan. Jonson's dramatic masterpieces, *Every Man in His Humour*, *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *The Silent Woman* (and the Roman tragedies, in a hasty parenthesis, since they have fewer admirers), owe nothing to the Master Surveyor. But some of the later plays, including *Bartholomew Fair*, many of the poems, and, of course, the masques themselves are clearly influenced, if not generated, by the collaboration. The poet would have been a less varied and less accomplished writer if his path had never crossed that of the great designer.

Before the two combined their energies Jonson had already levied on his classical learning and his innate didacticism to produce three "entertainments," and Inigo Jones had already designed masques. However, when they joined to create *The Masque of Blackness*, the genre of the masque became a new force in dramatic art—a force that apparently spent itself in approximately a quarter of a century, although its effect on later productions in the theater, particularly operatic productions, is perhaps very large, but probably incalculable. With the exception of Milton's *Comus*, surely less successful as theatrical entertainment than as ethical and philosophical poetry, the great masques are almost exclusively the works of Jonson and Jones. Their collaboration included the glory and the decay of the form—the latter when the flashing scenery outweighed and finally crushed the words and thoughts of the libretto. Of course, the libretto was but one part of the masque, the whole of which can only be partially reconstructed from sketches by the designers, fragments of music by the composers, and descriptions by the poets. But even so, it is hardly fair to say of the libretti that "even Ben Jonson's words are not much more than the stick of the rocket after the firework has flamed and faded."<sup>1</sup> In the first place, the sorry fate of operas cursed with poor libretti is ample testimony to the importance of

<sup>1</sup> *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, VI, 371.



words; in the second, Ben Jonson's words were the core around which the whole fabric of music, sculpture, and architecture was constructed. Thanks to his poetry, the visual "rocket" of the masques is not entirely lost.

The brief flowering of the masque does not mean that its roots were few or shallow. The central dance (though greatly changed) is as old as drama itself. In Ben Jonson's masques meet many veins of drama old and new: Old English folkplays, *Commedia del Arte*, Greek tragedy, comical satire, and dainty pastoral. Their verse and subject matter are more varied by far than those of the plays. They are also more fanciful, more conventionally "poetic," than the plays.<sup>2</sup>

Three aspects of masque and poetry will be discussed in this chapter: first, the poetry of Jonson's masques; secondly, his nondramatic poetry which deals directly with the masques or their creators, particularly Inigo Jones; thirdly, his nondramatic poetry which is obviously influenced by the masques and their accompanying arts. Enemy though he was, the figure of Inigo Jones can be discerned behind all three groups of poetry, most clearly, of course, behind the second group.

From *The Masque of Blackness* (1605) through *Chloris* (1631) Ben and Inigo shared in the creation of thirteen masques. The importance of this collaboration to the surveyor has been underestimated. J. Alfred Gotch believes, and presents ample evidence to substantiate his belief, that the conception of Inigo Jones as a gifted architect who occasionally turned his hand to court trifles is wrong; that on the contrary he was primarily a designer of masques who

<sup>2</sup> The Oxford *Jonson* (II, 249-334) contains a brief historical account of the masque and a detailed discussion of Jonson's masques. On page 250 Herford states that the masques more than any other of Jonson's works reflect "the fertility and varied capacity of his genius." Volume VII of *Ben Jonson*, edited by Percy and Evelyn Simpson (1941), is the first complete critical text of the masques, and adds to Herford's account of them. Allardyce Nicoll's *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage* is an elaborate, fully illustrated study of the technique of masque production. Enid Welsford's *Court Masque* is an account of literary origins and influences; the early chapters cover the development of the masque from primitive sources, and more directly from the mummings; the seventh and eighth chapters are largely given over to the flowering and fading of the masque in the hands of Jonson and Jones. She calls attention to Ben's use of figures from the *Commedia del Arte*, the "Burratines and Pantaloon" in *The Vision of Delight (The Court Masque)*, p. 203. For a study of folk-play and sword-play elements in Ben's masques one may consult C. R. Baskervill's "Sources of *The Masque of Christmas* and of *Love's Welcome*," *Modern Philology*, VI (October, 1908), 257-70.

won his appointment as King's Surveyor because of this skill; that his position as architect for the King limited his activities almost entirely to the court and did not allow him to make much use of his architectural powers elsewhere; and that even in the court, routine activities and masques took much time from his architecture proper.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, as we shall see in a number of passages, Jonson was the member of the partnership who seemed to feel that he was degrading his muse by summoning her to a masque; whereas Jones was intensely proud of his part in the shows, and extremely jealous of his own glory. Surely no one now living shares Sir Arthur Sullivan's regrets that he devoted himself to light opera rather than to grand opera; and there is no more reason to regret Jonson's excursions into the lighter field on the fringe of drama, for his poetry gained thereby in beauty and variety.

Consideration of much of the poetry of the masques has crept into the earlier chapters, since passages in the masques were closely related to poems on mythology and pastoral, burlesque and grotesque, chivalry and courtly love. Other passages could be selected to illustrate poetic variety ranging from the "Odyssean" narrative verse in *Blackness* and *Beauty* (praised by Herford)<sup>4</sup> to the coarse ballads and Skeltonics of *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*. B. H. Newdigate's "Anthology" in *The Poems of Ben Jonson* includes the description of Truth from *Hymenæi* and a variety of songs and charms from other masques. Among these are the Gypsy's ballad-like account of the nauseous banquet to which Cock-Lorrel invited the devil, the weird charms of the witches in *The Masque of Queens*, and several brief songs which are reasonably independent of their contexts in the masques.

Enid Welsford points out the paradox that the masque, which flourished as the entertainment of a select, wealthy aristocracy, was more closely bound up with folk literature than was the popular theater.<sup>5</sup> Again, there are notable exceptions: Peele's *Old Wives Tale* and the anonymous *Mucedorus* are good examples of folk literature dramatized. Ben Jonson is a specific illustration of Welsford's paradox; the most learned poet of his day, who usually wrote lyrics for

<sup>3</sup> Gotch, *Inigo Jones*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 272-73.

<sup>5</sup> Welsford, *The Court Masque*, p. 3.

the best-trained composers to set to intricate counterpoint, made several songs with the forthright jingle of nursery rhymes—indeed, William Rose Benét admits the “Satyres Catch” from *Oberon* to his edition of *Mother Goose*, and Beatrix Potter uses it in *The Tailor of Gloucester*. Three specimens of these semi-folk rhymes will illustrate an unusual aspect of Ben Jonson, poet.

(THE SATYRES’) CATCH

Buz, quoth the blue Flie,  
Hum, quoth the Bee:  
Buz, and hum, they crie,  
And so doe wee.

In his eare, in his nose,  
Thus, doe you see?  
He eat the dormouse,  
Else it was hee.

This is not quite the pure nonsense it seems to be, for while it is being sung, the satyrs tickle with straws the ears and noses of the sleeping sentries. The dormouse is not entirely Carrollian, but is a familiar Elizabethan emblem of drowsiness and sleep, witness Sir Andrew Aguecheek’s “dormouse valour,” or Lovel’s speech in *The New Inn*:

I was the laziest creature,  
The most unprofitable signe of nothing,  
The veriest drone, and slept away my life  
Beyond the Dormouse, till I was in love!

Also reminiscent of the rhymes of *Mother Goose* is one of the charms in *The Masque of Queens*, which would not be out of place in *Mother Goose*.

The owle is abroad, the bat, and the toad,  
And so is the cat-a-mountaine,  
The ant, and the mole, sit both in a hole,  
And frog peeps out o’the fountaine;  
The dogs, they do bay, and the timbrels play,  
The spindle is now a turning;  
The Moone it is red, and the Starres are fled,  
But all the Sky is aburning.

## MASTER SURVEYOR

Quickly Dame, then, bring your part in,  
 Spurre, spurre, upon little Martin,  
 Merrily, merrily, make him saile,  
 A worme in his mouth, and a thorne in's taile,  
 Fire above, and fire below,  
 With a whip i'your hand, to make him go.

A more sophisticated charm appears in *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*; it is much better known than the other two, both for its own appearance in anthologies and for Herrick's imitation—one could almost say adaptation—of it in his "Night-piece, to Julia." Its first stanza suffices to show both its delicate imagery and its rhythm:

The Faery beame upon you,  
 The starres to glister on you;  
 A Moone of light,  
 In the Noone of night,  
 Till the Fire-drake hath or'e gone you.

These three brief selections are particularly good examples of lyrical spontaneity found more often in the masques than in the poems. They may not be native woodnotes wild; but if they are not, their skill defies analysis. All three occur in the antimasques—Ben's particular province in the development of the genre. Herford points out that there were comic "Antics" in the earlier masques and that in Jonson's *Entertainment at Highgate* (May 1, 1604) there was "a kind of prelude . . . still tentative and cautious." Also according to Herford, "the first known use of the term [Antimasque] is Jonson's in the preface to *The Masque of Queens*," from which masque the charms are quoted. Although this masque contains the first carefully developed antimasque, it had as a forerunner the antimasque of *The Hue and Cry after Cupid*; but the importance of the latter is not to be compared with *Queens*, which Herford considers the greatest of all Jonson's masques from the point of view of literature. It is noteworthy that the poetry of the witches is praised rather than the poetry in the masque proper. In this and later antimasques the poetry is often much more dramatic than the serious final portions of the masques, which contain more conventional and ethical poetry seldom as vigorous and never as suggestive of folk rhymes with their strong verbal rhythms.

An exhaustive study of the masques would require a complete monograph. The brief comments and illustrations here do little more than scratch the surface; but taken with the examples given in the earlier chapters and a few necessary illustrations of the poems influenced by musical forms to be discussed later in this chapter, they are enough to show considerable mutual influence between the poetry of the masques and that of the plays and poems. Inigo Jones's influence on the poetry discussed in this section is indirect, but certainly vital. It was only after several collaborations with the architect that Jonson began his artful antimasques, which contain, as we have seen, some of the most interesting and excellent poetry in the masques. The scenic effects and technical requirements of the masques certainly must have spurred the creative ability of the poet.

The famous quarrel between Jonson and Jones was responsible for three poems in which architect and masque alike are attacked. The quarrel and the satiric invective of these poems are not pertinent to the present discussion; but the lines which deal specifically with the masque are worth considering for the light (or shadow) which they throw on Jonson's knowledge and opinion of the masque as theatrical art.

"An Expostulation, with Inigo Jones" and "To Inigo Marquesse Would-bee, a Corollarie" are more valuable to the student of the masque than to the student of satire. The truth of this statement can be found by examining Herford's introductory chapter on the poems<sup>6</sup> and Allardyce Nicoll's *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage*; the former is pleased with the Martialian "Epigram of Inigo Jones," and dismisses the "Expostulation" as an exhibition of "angry whinings"; the latter, although perhaps unduly conscious of the personal animus in the "Expostulation" and its corollary, quotes them freely to illustrate technical practices of the scene-makers.<sup>7</sup> It was these technical devices which roused the wrath of the poet:

O showes! Showes! mighty showes!  
 The eloquence of Masques! what need of prose,  
 Or verse, or sense, t'express immortall you?  
 You are the Spectacles of state! Tis true

<sup>6</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 356-57.

<sup>7</sup> Nicoll, *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage*, pp. 129-37.

## MASTER SURVEYOR

Court Hiero-gly-phicks! and all Arts afford,  
 In the mere perspective of an inch bord!  
 You aske no more then certaine politique eyes!  
 Eyes, that can peirce into the mysteries  
 Of many colours! read them! and reveale  
 Mythologie, there, painted on slit-deale!  
 O to make bords to speake! there is a taskel  
 Painting, and Carpentry, are the soule of Masque!<sup>8</sup>

These lines explain in part Ben's quarrel with Inigo and his quarrel with the masque form: it is not the masque that he objects to; it is the excessive glorification of "slit-deale," false colors, meaningless spectacle. The remainder of the poem has other references to technical wonders. The "feate of Lanterne-Lerry; with fuliginous heate, whirling his whimsey's, by a subtilty sucked from the veines of shop-phylosophy!" is a reference to the complicated lighting effects procured by the use of "fine oild Lantern-paper";<sup>9</sup> the machines and the clouds with their goddesses, including Dame Architecture, "who no lesse a Goddess is, then painted cloth, Dele-boards, Vermilion, Lake, or Cinnopar, affords expression for," and finally "Omnipotent Designe" get ironic praise. On the whole, the attack is most direct; there is little use of figurative language. Even the references to the devices of the masque are made to one specific production, *Chloridia*. One of the few figures of speech, however, has a theatrical flavor:

Your trappings will not change you. Change your mind.  
 No velvet sheath, you weare, will alter kind.  
 A wodden dagger, is a dagger of Wood,  
 Though gold, or Ivory hafts, would make it good.<sup>10</sup>

Other figures of speech are related to Inigo rather than to his creations: there is a comparison of the Surveyor and Justice Adam Overdoe in *Bartholomew Fair*, and there may be an implied comparison with the puppet-master, Lanthorn Leatherhead, in the same play. Thus, the "Expostulation" is somewhat analogous to the "Execration," both poems being closely bound up with specific plays and masques either written or printed at about the same time as the poems were composed: the "Execration" is most closely related to *The*

<sup>8</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, p. 296.

<sup>9</sup> Nicoll, *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage*, pp. 59, 79.

<sup>10</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, p. 295.

*Staple of News*, *News from the New World*, *Neptune's Triumph*, and *The Fortunate Isles*; the "Expostulation" is related to *Bartholomew Fair*, *Chloridia*, and perhaps indirectly to *Love's Triumph through Callipolis*, if that masque was really the immediate cause of the quarrel.

"To Inigo Marquesse Would-bee," as its title states, is little more than a "corollarie" to the "Expostulation." It is chiefly a comparison of the King of Spain's "Inigo," who has been made a marquesse, and the King of England's Inigo, who is worthy to be styled "The Marquesse of New-ditch." The piece continues the attack on the falsity and flimsiness of scenery as well as on Inigo himself. The central section deals again with *Chloridia* and other transient creations of the designer.

Hee draw a Forum, with quadrivial streets!  
 Thou paint a Lane, where Thumbie, the Pygmie meets.  
 Hee some Colossus, to bestride the Seas,  
 From the fam'd Pillars of old Hercules!  
 Thy Canvas-Gyant att some channell a'mes,  
 Or Dowgate torrent, falling into Thames!  
 And stradling, shewes the boyes browne-paper fleet,  
 Yearely set out, there, to sayle downe the street!

Allardyce Nicoll discusses this passage in some detail; he points out the fact that when scenes were built in extreme perspective, the rear of the set was built to midget scale; Nicoll refers, of course, to the Queen's dwarf, Sir Geoffrey Hudson, who actually appeared in *Chloridia*; and finally, he explains the "browne-paper fleet" by giving an account of moving ships in *Somerset's Masque* (1613). These small ships ran in a groove between two wave machines, and gave the effect of being actual ships sailing. Nicoll cites Jonson's couplet as evidence that Jones borrowed and used this device in one or more of his masques.<sup>11</sup> Without this explanation Ben's figure of speech is in danger of literal interpretation—a picture of little boys actually sailing ships under one of Inigo's figures. Nicoll, naturally enough, emphasizes the side of the metaphor closest to the masque; lovers of Jonson's poetry will probably be even more interested in the other side of the metaphor, which evokes a picture of the ponderous Ben

<sup>11</sup> Nicoll, *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage*, loc. cit.

pausing to watch a group of small boys sailing their ships in a gutter, or possibly a still earlier picture of small Ben himself taking part in the annual sailing. Nor is this passage the only one to show keen-eyed interest in childish things. There is a stanza in the introductory poem in "Eupheme":

For, though that Rattles, Timbrels, Toyes,  
Take little Infants with their noyse,  
As prop'rest gifts, to Girles, and Boyes  
    Of light expence;  
Their Corrals, Whistles, and prime Coates,  
Their painted Maskes, their paper Boates,  
With Sayles of silke, as the first notes  
    Surprize their sense.

The point of this passage is that Lady Venetia as a child was superior to such playthings; but that does not imply condemnation of either the toys or their infantile owners. Such trifles as masks and paper boats irritated Jonson only when they were too highly regarded by adults, particularly adult King's surveyors.

I have already said that Herford prefers the "Epigram of Inigo Jones" to the "Expostulation" and its corollary, largely, it seems, because the first piece, like the "Execration," displays a more aloof and ironic attitude than the later pair. However, most of the merits of the "Epigram" may be traced to their original in the works of Martial, whereas the merits of the later works (as well as their demerits) belong primarily to their author. Then, too, a noble attitude, while pleasant to many readers, is not a requisite for competent or even excellent poetry. Sheer invective is not so popular now as it was in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries; but neither is "I-arise-from-dreams-of-thee" poetry. The "Expostulation" and "To Inigo Marquesse Would-bee" are in the satirical tradition and are in many ways similar to the poems on the vanities of clothing and other personal finery, discussed in the fourth chapter of this study, with the flimsy vanities and tawdry fineries of the masque substituted for the medieval preachers' favorite scapegoats. Some of the satirical condemnations of the age are worthy of the earlier satires.

Pack with your peddling Poetry, to the Stage,  
This is the Money-gett, Mechanick age!



is always a timely couplet. And aside from the derogatory statements about the Surveyor, his creations, or the materialistic and nonpoetical age, we have the occasional strong and vivid figures of speech which show both alert observation and mastery of language.

Another of the late long poems (Ben's nondramatic Muse coursed over longer distances in the late poems, perhaps, nay certainly, limiting readers in consequence) is closely related to the masques and to Inigo; but, indeed, this poem, "An Epistle Answering to One That Asked to Be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben," is a summing up of the poet's philosophy and attitudes on a great many matters, not just the airing of a personal grudge. In it at times the satirical Jonson speaks; at other times the stoical Jonson. That it is not to be classified as a satire is clear from Herford's characterization of it as "an outburst of impassioned thought about friendship."<sup>12</sup>

Of the several themes from other poems harmonized in the "Epistle," the first is the "touchstone of truth" motif:

Men that are safe, and sure, in all they doe,  
Care not what trials they are put unto;  
They meet the fire, the Test, as Martyrs would;  
And though Opinion stampe them not, are gold.

These lines almost paraphrase some commendatory verses in James Warre's *Touchstone of Truth* (1630). The verses are signed "B.J.," and are ascribed to Jonson by both Gifford and Newdigate:

Truth is the triall of it selfe,  
And needs no other touch.  
And purer then the purest Gold  
Refine it neere so much

. . .

It is the Sword that doth divide,  
The Marrow from the Bone.  
And in effect of Heavenly love  
Doth shew the Holy one.<sup>13</sup>

This figurative combination of religion and metallurgy is also present in "Eupheme," (The Mind):

<sup>12</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 373.

<sup>13</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, p. 264.

## MASTER SURVEYOR

A Mind so pure, so perfect fine,  
 As 'tis not radiant, but divine:  
 And so disdaining any tryer;  
 'Tis got where it can try the fire.

To cull all the praises of golden Truth in Jonson's works would be a large order. Let it suffice to remind ourselves of the appearance of this same Truth in *Hymenai* with the same enemy, Opinion, that the opening lines of the "Epistle" introduce. The three passages here quoted are sufficient to illustrate the varied orchestration of the same theme—a theme not entirely different from Mark Van Doren's "Wit," which, however, celebrates an abstraction more in favor at present than Ben's "Truth."

After the lines on the true man and his lack of repute with Opinion (the natural opponent of Truth in the masques), the "Epistle" proceeds to a group fitted for satires, satirical comedies, or anti-masques: first, those "That live in the wild Anarchie of Drinke."<sup>14</sup>

. . . that will jeast  
 On all Soules that are absent; even the dead[;]  
 Like flies, or wormes, with mans corrupt parts fed.

News-mongering follows backbiting in the catalogue: "What is't to me," asks Ben, who lacked the proper international attitude, "whether the French Designe Be, or be not, to get the Val-telline?"

. . . I'll be well,  
 Though I do neither heare those newes, nor tell  
 Of Spaine or France; or were not prick'd downe one  
 Of the late Mysterie of reception.

These satirical passages are aimed at groups represented by Inigo Jones, Nathaniel Butter, and Captain "Pamplet," if they do not contain covert allusions to the individuals themselves.<sup>15</sup>

The remainder of the poem, the part most praised by Herford, contains its most striking imagery. Going on from the slight implied

<sup>14</sup> This phrase is repeated literally from the epigram "On the Townes Honest Man."

<sup>15</sup> Captain Pamphlet (or "Pamplet," as the Folio spells it) is certainly and Nathaniel Butter is probably present in the "Execration." See "Notes on Jonson's 'Execration upon Vulcan,'" MLN, XLVI (March, 1931), 150-53.

in his being forbidden entrance to the "Mysterie of reception,"<sup>16</sup> Ben says:

But that's a blow, by which in time I may  
Lose all my credit with the Christmas Clay,  
And animated Porc'lane of the Court;  
I, and for this neglect, the courser sort  
Of earthen Jarres, there may molest me too.  
Well, with mine owne fraile Pitcher, what to doe  
I have decreed; keepe it from waves, and presse;  
Lest it be justled, crack'd, made nought, or lesse:  
Live to that point I will; for which I am man,  
And dwell as in my Center, as I can.

The image of the "earthen Jarres" must be indebted to the Master Surveyor's "Thirty pound in pipkins," which, according to the "Ex-postulation with Inigo Jones," were the cornerstone of his fortune. To what Ben's "owne frail Pitcher" is indebted I do not know. His enemies, perhaps even some of his followers, would surely have preferred a jug rather than a frail pitcher as his emblem. The images of friendship, however, which are drawn from the masque, are beyond question apt:

Such as are square, wel-tagde, and permanent,  
Not built with Canvasse, paper, and false lights  
As are the Glorious Scenes, at the great sights;  
And that there be no fev'ry heats, nor colds,  
Oylie Expansions, or shrunke durtie folds,  
But all so cleare, and led by reasons flame,  
As but to stumble in her sight were shame.

The beauty, power, and suggestiveness of poetry vary greatly with the reader, but the image of oily expansions and shrunk dirty folds seems to me to be perfect in sound and meaning for false and hypocritical friendship. Although it is significant that the most unpleasant of the images is drawn from the masque, it is equally noteworthy that in the same passage Reason, lighting the path of true friendship, is like a figure taken from a masque. As usual, Jonson's quarrel is not with the masque as a literary type, but with the false and flimsy

<sup>16</sup> This complaint of neglect at court is related to the quarrel between Jonson and Jones by Herford and Simpson (I, 90) and by Newdigate (p. 360).

scenes, the canvas, paper, and above all, the "false lights," contrasted with Reason's flame. It surely would not be too far-fetched an assumption that as an image this latter figure, Reason, represents Ben's part of the masques as opposed to Inigo's part, which needed neither verse, nor prose, nor sense.

Allardyce Nicoll opens his *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage* with a beautiful account of Prospero's masque and speech in the fourth act of *The Tempest*:<sup>17</sup>

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and  
Are melted into air, into thin air:  
And like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on; and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.

Nicoll believes that both the masque of Prospero and the imagery in this speech were inspired by "the scenic artistry of Inigo Jones": "To Shakespeare these things were marvels from which he wrought some of his most beautiful lines; to Jonson they were merely annoyance and vexation of spirit."<sup>18</sup> There is a possible refutation of this statement in the conclusion of Lovel's second speech before the Court of Love in *The New Inn*:

PRUDENCE: The Court's dissolu'd, remou'd, and the play ended.  
No sound, or aire of Loue more, I decree it.  
LOVEL: From what a happinesse hath that one word  
Throwne me, into the gulfes of misery?  
To what a bottomlesse despaire? how like  
A Court remoouing, or an ended Play  
Shewes my abrupt precipitate estate.<sup>19</sup>

That this is on a far lower plane than Prospero's impassioned speech is quite true, but the most likely interpretation of the "ended play" seems to me to be the same as the "insubstantial pageant." Nicoll's

<sup>17</sup> Nicoll, *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage*, p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24. <sup>19</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, VI, 475-76.

statement must be qualified still farther. In spite of various cults among writers of our day, noble and beautiful poetry which avoids mawkishness remains the favorite with the great mass of readers and the majority of scholars; hence, the preference for the Shakespearean image of the "insubstantial pageant" of the world in which we live over the Jonsonian image of the "shrunke durtye folds" of false friendship is entirely understandable. But that preference should not lead to the belief that one of the men found poetry in the scenery of the masque while the other found *only* vexation. Both men found poetry; the images in both passages are masterful and appropriate. Although most of the poetry dealing directly with Inigo and masque-settings is hostile or satiric in tone, we shall see that the masques left marks on many of his poems which were far from any satirical intent. Also, in the earlier masques the vivid descriptions of scenery left by the poet indicate that he was by no means impervious to the beauty of paint, canvas, and pasteboard.

Ben's contacts with musicians, perhaps with plastic artists, began before the long association with Inigo Jones; but the successful collaboration must have given the poet much freer access to the artistic circles of the court. There he was thrown with musicians, choreographers, painters, and architects. The resulting interest in the fine arts affected his poetry decidedly; and once again there is reason to believe that Camden had prepared his pupil to make the most of his later experiences. Camden's father was "a skilled craftsman of Lichfield, who had removed to London and become a member of the Guild of Painter-Stainers." Camden himself gave evidence of pride in his father's calling "by bequeathing to the Company of Cordwainers and the Guild of Painter-Stainers each a piece of plate inscribed, 'Guil. Camdenus filis (*sic*) Sampsonis pictoris Londinensis.'" <sup>20</sup> One would expect a favorite pupil of Camden's to like painting.

The masques made it possible for Ben to become acquainted with the works, if not the persons, of many of the court painters. William Burlase, represented in the Folio both in his own poem to Jonson and in Jonson's answer, painted a portrait of the poet. Gerard Hon-

<sup>20</sup> Wright, *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, p. 316.

thorst was formerly believed the artist who painted the best-known, most frequently copied and reproduced portrait of Ben, but Percy Simpson denies the attribution.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps some day evidence will be forthcoming to show that the portrait is the one referred to in Bursale's "Painter to the Poet" and Ben's reply, "The Poet to the Painter." The poet may also have known Van Dyck, who painted several portraits of Sir Kenelm and Lady Venetia and may well be the painter addressed in "The Picture of the Body" in "Eupheme." Finally, J. A. Gotch reminds us that the earliest extant document referring to Inigo called him a "maker of pictures."<sup>22</sup>

The essay on painting in the *Discoveries* is not very helpful to a study of relations between the poet and contemporary painters; it is largely theoretical and literary, devoting more space to Greek painting than to any other subject. It does, however, conclude with a list of "six famous Painters in Italy: who were excellent, and emulous of the Ancients: Raphael de Urbino, Michel Angelo Buonarota, Titian, Antonie of Correggio, Sebastian of Venice, Iulio Romano, and Andrea Sartorio." In the poem "To the Right Honourable, the Lord Treasurer of England" the artistic merits of the group here listed are strengthened decidedly by the substitution of Tintoretto for Sebastiano del Piombo, but Andrea del Sarto is left out altogether:

I would, if price, or prayer could them get,  
Send in, what or Romano, Tintaret,  
Titian, or Raphael, Michael Angelo  
Have left in fame to equall, or out-goe  
The old Greek-hands in picture or in stone.

For a classicist, this is high praise indeed.

Although it is poor logic to reason from omissions, Leonardo da Vinci's absence from both lists demands conjectural explanation. It is difficult to conceive of a history of Italian painting after Vasari which would omit such a figure as Leonardo. On the other hand, a not-too-scholarly traveler through Italy, unless his way took him to Santa Maria della Grazie, in Milan, might overlook a painter who left a surprisingly small number of completed pictures. Assuming,

<sup>21</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, Vol. V, prefatory note on the frontispiece.

<sup>22</sup> Gotch, *Inigo Jones*, p. 11.

then, that Ben Jonson did not learn of Italian painters from a book, where did he learn of them? Of course, he may have picked up information from Van Dyck, who traveled and studied extensively in Italy; but a more likely supposition is that the information came from Inigo Jones himself. Inigo's strength was not in his scholarship; he visited Italy twice and made many sketches there; in his poem "To His false Friend Mr. Ben Jonson" he complains that when they were drunk together Ben always wanted to talk about Scotland; Ben, in his poems, complains of endless talk about design. All these things make a conjecture that Inigo illustrated his arguments with references to pictures he had seen in Italy more than a wild guess.

Although at times Ben is swept away by his anger against Inigo and seems to transfer its overplus to the arts practiced by Inigo, we should by no means conclude that he had no appreciation for those arts or no delight in them. Ben's account of the ancient authorities on architecture, despised by Inigo, shows an interest in architecture on the poet's part. And as to painting, "Whosoever loves not Picture, is injurious to Truth: and all the wisdom of Poetry," he wrote in the *Discoveries*. In his reply to Burlase he praised the art thus:

O, had I now your manner, maistry, might,  
Your Power of handling, shadow, ayre, and spright,  
How I would draw, and take hold and delight.

Put, you are he can paint; I can but write:  
A Poet hath no more but black and white,  
Ne knowes he flatt'ring Colours, or false light.

Yet when of friendship I would draw the face  
A letter'd mind, and a large heart would place  
To all posteritie; I will write Burlase.

The phrase "flatt'ring Colours, or false light" might conceivably be another derogatory glance at the masque similar to the passages in "An Epistle Answering to One That Asked to Be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben"; but the poem as a whole is no less complimentary to painter and painting for the mildly hostile image.

The third poem in "Eupheme" ("The Picture of the Body,") is addressed to a painter who has come to paint the Lady Venetia's portrait. At first glance its directions would seem to be unintelligible to any painter before the surrealists.

## MASTER SURVEYOR

Draw first a Cloud: all save her neck;  
 And, out of that, make Day to breake;  
 Till, like her face, it doe appeare,  
 And Men may thinke, all light rose there.

Then let the beames of that, disperse  
 The Cloud, and show the Universe;  
 But at such distance, as the eye  
 May rather yet adore, then spy.

The Heaven design'd, draw next a Spring,  
 With all that Youth, or it can bring:  
 Four Rivers branching forth like Seas,  
 And Paradise confining these.

Last, draw the circles of this Globe,  
 And let there be a starry Robe  
 Of Constellations 'bout her horld;  
 And thou hast painted beauties world.

On first reading, this passage appears not only un-Jonsonian, but incoherent—the product of a mind rushing off into physical and mental space in search of wild images. Gradually one can make some “Day to breake” just by rereading and trying to visualize the images; but the obscurity lifts entirely and immediately if one reads two descriptions in *The Masque of Beauty*.

## SPLENDOR

In a robe of flame-colour, naked-breasted; her bright haire loose flowing:  
 She was *drawne in a circle of clouds, her face, and body breaking thorow*;  
 and in her hand a branch, with two Roses, a white, and a red . . .

## PERFECTIO

. . . About her body the Zodiack, with the Signes.

A mere interest in “picture” is not enough to explain these poetic images; the paintings from which they are drawn are unmistakably part of the “body” of the masques—Inigo’s portion—so roughly used elsewhere by the poet. In other poems there are probably other examples of visual borrowings from the masques, but few so striking as those in “Eupheme.” “Charis” contains at least one lyric with a background of masque scenery: in “Her Triumph” Charis rides in the chariot of Venus, drawn by swans and doves and driven by Cupid.



B. H. Newdigate thinks it possible that "Charis" herself took part in *The Hue and Cry after Cupid*.<sup>23</sup>

These two brief poems from "Eupheme" and "Charis" suggest several problems. How much of the vitality of Renaissance mythology is due to visual representations of gods and goddesses in masques? How many mythological paintings (such as Botticelli's *Primavera* or *Birth of Venus*) are based on masques instead of classical texts? Finally, how much of Ben Jonson's mythological poetry is indebted to his familiarity with his collaborators' labors? The examination of *Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists* and the "Execration upon Vulcan" in the second chapter showed clearly that they were cut from the same cloth; and such a poem as the "Hymn to Diana," in *Cynthia's Revels*, is part and parcel of the masque tradition. The extent of the interactions of masque, poetry, and painting cannot be accurately measured, but their relationships must have been both strong and numerous.

Even more important than the plastic arts in the development of Jonson the poet was music. In Jonson's day, music—skillful, highly technical music—was part of the daily recreation of great numbers of citizens. It was also an important element of drama proper and one of the main pillars on which the masque rested. Like most other Elizabethan children, Ben probably began his musical education in grammar school; like most other dramatists of the period, he wrote songs for his plays; hence, it cannot be said that Inigo and the masques were solely responsible for his acquaintance with music. But certainly the collaboration with the designer led to the poet's meeting and working with several of the leading musicians of the court; and the commendatory verses addressed to some of those musicians lead to the inference that there was more friendly coöperation between poet and musicians than between poet and architect.

In his verses to Ferrabosco and Filmer, Jonson pays high tribute to music and to musicians. We owe the preservation of the music of a number of Ben's songs to the publication of Alphonso Ferrabosco's *Book of Ayres* (1609). Jonson himself contributed com-

<sup>23</sup> Jonson, *The Poems*, ed. by Newdigate, pp. 355-56. See also Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, I, 53: "'Charis' was probably the lady who played Venus . . . in the masque, hitherto known as the *Hue and Cry after Cupid*, performed at Lord Haddington's marriage in 1608."

mentatory verses to his friend's book, referring to classical legends of the power of music in "building townes, & making wilde beasts tame," to the gentle effects of music on human passions, particularly its power to "heighten pietie" and

To say, indeed, shee were the soule of heaven,  
That the eight spehere, no lesse, than planets seven,  
Mov'd by her order, and the ninth more high,  
Including all, were thence call'd harmonie.

This poem is more learned and more abstract than the epigram addressed to Edward Filmer, which is a charming compliment to the composer who had chosen a delightful way to teach Henrietta Maria the English tongue. It is also a compliment to the Queen and to the wedded arts of music and poetry:

What charming Peales are these,  
That, while they bind the senses, doe so please?  
They are the Marriage-rites  
Of two, the choicest Paire of Mans delights,  
Musique and Poesie:  
French Aire, and English verse, here Wedded lie.  
Who did this Knot compose,  
Againe hath brought the Lilly to the Rose;  
And with their Chained dance,  
Recelebrates the joyfull Match with France.  
They are a Schoole to win  
The faire French Daughter to learne English in;  
And, graced with her Song,  
To make the Language sweet upon her tongue.<sup>24</sup>

Since both these poems were printed before the actual break between Ben and Inigo, they are probably not to be set down solely to a desire to show the architect the importance of the musicians' share in the masques—although perhaps that motive entered to a slight degree. It very probably entered into the praise of a later musical collaborator; this was Nicholas Lanier, who shared in the masque performed at the house of Lord Haye (untitled in the Folio, this masque is called either *The Masque of Lethe* or *Lovers Made Men*). Lanier

<sup>24</sup> The Chaucerian tag is very probably a conscious, not an unconscious, echo—particularly in view of similar echoes in *The Sad Shepherd*, *The New Inn*, and *Love's Welcome at Bolsover*.

designed the scenery, composed the music, and sang it "(after the Italian manner) *Stylo recitativo*." Hence, Herford calls it "in effect, the earliest operatic piece in the language."<sup>25</sup> He also laments that later English opera was supplied with no such libretto: "Jonson has composed no daintier and more gracious verse than these speeches and songs, with their intricately interwoven rhymes and quick inter-changing rhythms."<sup>26</sup>

Willia McClung Evans has made a far more complete study of the effects of music on Jonson's poetry than anything which can be attempted in the brief scope of a single chapter. Her book, *Ben Jonson and Elizabethan Music*, is largely devoted to the influences of song forms on Ben's lyric verse; but she also points out that Ben engaged in a great deal of literary research on music, particularly Greek music.

He came upon descriptions of evil incantations which he copied laboriously with the hope that similar effects could be produced in the *Masque of Queens*. Everywhere he sought for suggestions of infernal harmony to furnish his witch-hags with appropriately satanic revels. During the process of his searching, the poet collected enough odd facts, obscure details, and amusing anecdotes to make a history of primitive and classical song.<sup>27</sup>

Such a use of theory is in keeping with Jonson's practice in many other fields; abundant reading was combined with practical observation, whether he dealt with art or alchemy.

Miss Evans explains Jonson's poetic successes by his constant association with the composers of his day. She even believes that "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes" owes much of its excellence to the fact that it was written for an already existing melody.<sup>28</sup> While her book may not convince all readers that Ben had a *natural* lyric gift, which both Swinburne and Herford deny, she shows convincingly that he had much technical knowledge of the music of his day and that he constructed his songs technically to suit the performers' special abilities. She is herself convinced that the merit of Jonson's lyric poems is in direct proportion to their nearness to music: the songs set to music already composed being best, those written to be set to music next best, those related to music, but not intended to be sung

<sup>25</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 301.

<sup>27</sup> Evans, *Ben Jonson and Elizabethan Music*, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

next best, and songs without music—"bookish rhymes about alchemy, usurers, court scandal, and teachers . . . subtle in thought and pointed or twisted in meaning"<sup>29</sup>—poorest.

This extremely unorthodox hierarchy is much too rigid, but along with Walker's article on the lyrics, it is perhaps a valuable antidote to the view held by Maurice Castelain that Jonson is not a creditable poet except as a satirist. Miss Evans's principal theory of the effect of song forms on the verbal melody of Jonson's poems is valuable and is justified by the evidence she has collected. Her explanation of the varying line lengths of the lyrical stanzas—that they owe their variation to musical patterns—seems more reasonable and tenable than Kathryn A. McEuen's theory of indebtedness to classical forms.<sup>30</sup> The use of rhyme, so important in Elizabethan and modern songs, is in itself a supporter of the former rather than the latter theory. However, both theories may be right in part—perhaps it would be possible to say in whole. Certainly the odes, which make up a special case, owe their forms to classical precedent; and perhaps the weight of that precedent encouraged Ben to follow what was a contemporary practice of the musicians.

All in all, Ben probably was indebted to his worst enemy for many benefits, material and artistic. The prestige of the successful collaboration led to Ben's pension and his tierce of canary annually—no mean reward for the master of ceremonies at the lyric feasts celebrated by his "son" Herrick. Aside from the royal pension, the reputation at court made other commissions available; the last one, *Love's Welcome at Bolsover* (1634), aimed a few pointed shafts at "Iniquo Vitruvius." Inigo and the masques furnished abundant material for the satirist; but in addition to the material benefits and the supply of satiric targets, the architect and his creations led to the poet's wider acquaintance with other artists and arts and impregnated several of his poems with vivid visual imagery. The masques, indirectly Inigo Jones, are an important skein—not separated from but woven into Jonson's works from the time of *Cynthia's Revels* (1600-1601) to the end of his active career. Hence, they (the masques and Inigo) helped him to become a master cook, instead of a highly specialized chef of tart humours.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.    <sup>30</sup> McEuen, *Classical Influence on the Tribe of Ben*, p. 90.

## CHAPTER VII

# Master Cook

COOKE: Were you ever a Cooke?

POET: A Cooke? no surely.

COOKE: Then you can be no good Poet: for a good Poet differs nothing at all from a Master-Cooke. Eithers Art is the wisdom of the Mind. . . . I am by my place, to know how to please the palates of the guests; so, you, are to know the palate of the times: study the severall tastes.

NEPTUNE'S TRIUMPH

THE earlier chapters of this study have demonstrated the difficulty of attaching to Ben Jonson the tags and labels of literary criticism. It is now necessary, however, to deal with one of these. How much of a "classicist" was Jonson? To answer this question, some working definition of a very wide and elastic term must be set up. The term "classicism" as applied to the works of the Renaissance or of the eighteenth century in England means at least three different things to different scholars: (1) use of the works of the ancient Greeks and Romans for subject matter; (2) interest in form and structural proportion; and (3) a somewhat intangible restraint and mental balance corresponding to the formal balance. Of course, the first of these is the easiest to demonstrate in a study of Ben Jonson's writings, and the third is the most difficult, though by no means the least important. These three conceptions of classicism will be considered separately.

Jonson's use of classical subject matter ranges from strict, literal translation to very free alteration and assimilation. Most critical blame has fallen on him for those works which he simply "Englished"; yet in them he performed a very real service for English readers. With the Loeb Classical Library at our elbows, not to mention numerous other accurate translations, we are likely to forget that before Jonson's translations the "mere English reader" might well be taking Dictys or Dares along with his Homer (according to Douglas Bush, even Chapman was not innocent of such mingling of materials in his Homer <sup>1</sup>), or a medieval *exemplum* along with his Ovid. But when Ben Jonson called a work a translation, he gave his

<sup>1</sup> Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition*, p. 211.

reader as nearly as he could just what the original text contained. This service to scholarship has been forgotten or overlooked, but the failure to make fine poetry of literal translation has been too well remembered. Swinburne complained that "a worse translator than Ben Jonson never committed a double outrage on two languages at once." Of *The Art of Poetry* he said: "The translation is one of those miracles of incompetence, incongruity, and insensibility, which must be seen to be believed." Swinburne's "crowning example," his particular *bête noire*, was a couplet in *Poetaster*, a part of the translation of a passage from the *Aeneid*:

Meane while, the skies 'gan thunder; and in taile  
Of that, fell powring stormes of sleete, and haile.

"And it is Virgil—," shouted Swinburne, "Virgil, of all men and all poets—to whom his traducer has the assurance to attribute this inexpressible atrocity of outrage!"<sup>2</sup>

However, many of Ben's contemporaries were more impressed with the presence of accuracy than with the absence of poetic fire in the translations, though the dedication, "To the Reader in Ordinary," prefixed to *Catiline* shows conclusively that there were some cavaliers even in his own day. Evidently the criticism which touched his sorest spot was that directed against the oration of Cicero in that play: "Would I had deserv'd but halfe so well of it in translation, as that ought to deserve of you in judgment, if you have any." *Catiline* was Jonson's particular darling among his plays (he seems to have been almost, if not entirely, alone in his preference), and he thought most highly of the last three acts, particularly the translations from Cicero. The first two acts, almost unanimously considered the best by readers who deign to peruse *Catiline* at all, he thought the worst. In other words, the arrogant Ben, in this play, if not elsewhere, preferred his translations from classical sources to his more original passages.

In 1621 John Ashmore selected and printed certain odes of Horace "Englished," including one ascribed to Jonson:

This ode following, came unto my hands under the name of *Mr. Ben. Iohnson*: which (for the happy imitation of *Horace*) I have also published.

<sup>2</sup> Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 114.

AD AUTHOREM.

*The Argument.*

Till his Sire true doe claim his due,  
 This Infant I doe cherish:  
 Though without name, it were a shame  
 It should in darknes perish.

Remember, when blinde Fortune knits her brow,  
 Thy minde be not deieted over-lowe:  
 Nor let thy thoughts too insolently swell,  
 Though all thy hopes doe prosper ne'r so well.  
 For, drink thy teares, with sorrow still opprest,  
 Or taste pure wine, secure and ever blest,  
 In those remote, and pleasant shady fields  
 Where stately Pine and Poplar shadow yeelds,  
 Or circling streames that warble, passing by;  
 All will not help, sweet friend: For, thou must die.  
 The house, thou hast, thou once must leave behind thee,  
 And those sweet babes thou often kissest kindly:  
 And when th'hast gotten all the wealth thou can,  
 Thy paines is taken for another man.  
 Alas! what poor advantage doth it bring,  
 To boast thy selfe descended of a King!  
 When those, that have no house to hide their heads,  
 Finde in their grave as warm and easie beds.<sup>3</sup>

The "Argument" is of course by the editor, not the poet; the latter apparently never did "claim his due." The poem does not appear in any edition of Jonson's works hitherto printed; it is not even in Newdigate's edition, which has many doubtful pieces. It was, however, reprinted in Corser's *Collectanea Anglo-Poetica* in 1860 and in *Anglia* in 1915. It will appear in a forthcoming volume of the Oxford *Jonson* among the spurious poems. Percy Simpson denies the attribution to Jonson chiefly because of the departures from the original. On the other hand, Joseph Quincy Adams and James G. McManaway of

<sup>3</sup> John Ashmore, *Certain Selected Odes of Horace, Englished, and their arguments annexed*, London, 1621 (STC 13799). See also Thomas Corser's *Collectanea Anglo-Poetica*, I, 66-70 (printed in the Chetham Society's *Remains, Historical and Literary*, LII, 1860), and Briggs, "Studies in Ben Jonson," *Anglia*, XXXIX (1915), 249-50. Briggs agrees with Percy Simpson in doubting the attribution to Jonson, remarking: "This sounds about as much like Jonson as it does like Walt Whitman." I have transcribed the lines from a photostat of the copy of *Certain Selected Odes* in The Folger Shakespeare Library.

the Folger Shakespeare Library believe it highly likely that the poem is genuine. Certainly the external evidence points to Jonson: the date of publication, sixteen years before Jonson's death, makes a false attribution a dubious procedure. Internal evidence is more difficult to weigh; but if the poem is considered an "imitation," as its editor calls it, rather than an "Englising" of Horace II. iii, it does not differ greatly from similar Jonsonian poems. Without changing the fundamental idea of the Latin poem, the English version is more concise and omits proper names.

Herford was by no means so uncomplimentary to the literal translations as Swinburne was, but he joined the latter in condemning the translation of *The Art of Poetry*, and in lamenting the loss of Jonson's commentary on his text. Herford also found fault with the literalness of the first "Song to Celia" in *Volpone*, but he praised the "Epigram of Inigo Jones," which is little more than an "Englising" of one of Martial's epigrams, and he recognized in Ben's work one of the essential qualifications of a good translator, "complete mastery of the original."<sup>4</sup> The "Epigram of Inigo Jones" represents a slight departure from literal translation, being in part adapted to the idiosyncrasies of the King's Surveyor; but the poem is most successful when it is reasonably close to its source. For instance, in the last line ("Thy forehead is too narrow for my brand"), highly praised by Herford, much of the success is due to accurate rendering of the Latin original in terse English. On the other hand, in the lines altered to refer specifically to Inigo the poem suffers from incoherence—surely a rare sin for Ben.

This epigram is typical of a group of Jonson's poems which use the same method of translating with minor alterations in names of characters and setting—bear in mind that Jonson himself did not call them translations, though he certainly did not try to hide their origin. Dryden, Pope, and Samuel Johnson continued this practice of adapting classical poems, particularly satires, to the English scene. But Jonson sometimes goes farther in altering the spirit of his original rather than its setting or characters. For example in the "Epode" ("The Forest," XI):

<sup>4</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 407.



He that for love of goodnesse hateth ill,  
 Is more crowne-worthy still,  
 Than he, which for sins penalty forbears.  
 His heart sins, though he feares.

A similar passage in Smart's translation of Horace runs: "The good, *on the contrary*, hate sin from their love of virtue: you will commit no crime, *merely* for the fear of punishment. Let there be a prospect of escaping, you will confound sacred and profane things together." Kathryn A. McEuen cites this passage (Horace, Epistle I. xvi), as being the lines which "form the basis of Jonson's sententious statement."<sup>5</sup> But "crowne-worthy" is clearly Jonson's, not Horace's, and its connotation is surely religious, referring to the crown of the blessed in Heaven. "His heart sinnes, though he feares" is completely new and foreign to Horace. If the line has a "source" at all, it is Matthew v. 28. Horatian and Biblical ideas are fused into a new and different poetry, most of the lines being more akin to the Roman, but the spirit as a whole being more Biblical. It is not necessary to suppose that Ben had an open copy of Horace at his left hand and a copy of the *New Testament* open at his right. Both books had unquestionably left marks on his mind, and the fusion was far more likely to have taken place within than in a patchwork fashion on paper.

Scattered through his works are a number of passages that have slight, sometimes more than slight, parallels in Latin and Greek. It seems to me unsafe to speak of "sources" in such cases. For example, again, Mrs. McEuen traces Jonson's third epigram, "To My Bookseller," to separate passages from two of Horace's works.<sup>6</sup> Again I quote Smart's translation:

No shop nor stall holds my books, which the sweaty hands of the vulgar  
 . . . may soil.  
 . . . exposed in an open box . . . be conveyed, into the street that sells  
 frank-incense, and spices, and pepper, and whatever is wrapped up in  
 impertinent writings.

Jonson's epigram, in combining and slightly altering these ideas, sharply localizes and modernizes the final effect:

<sup>5</sup> McEuen, *Classical Influence on the Tribe of Ben*, p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

let this feeling prevent the continued flow of the native tradition or the vital observation of the life around him. The problem of Jonson's classicism, then, cannot be satisfactorily solved merely by finding out what ancient sources he used.

Many critics, notably Walter Pater, have felt the essence of classicism to be interest in form and construction rather than in the imitation of ancient subject matter. Again, however, the difficulty of a satisfactory definition presents itself. The Parthenon is generally accepted as the ultimate ideal of classical form. Set off against the *apparently* rigid and exact proportions of a Greek temple is the Gothic cathedral. The very name "Gothic" means "savage, barbarous, unclassical." Yet nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars have found satisfaction in the structural excellence of the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages. Instead of finding horrible contrasts, these scholars have found truer kinship between the Greeks and the "Goths" than between the Greeks and the neoclassicists. The structure of *The Divine Comedy*, though it is medieval, is not inferior to the structure of the *Aeneid*; and however much Dante's poem owed to the classics, its form is not indebted to classical predecessors.

In considering Jonson's classicism from the angle of form and structure, then, the question again arises: is classical form that which arises from imitation of the ancients, or is it construction that is carefully proportioned? If it is the former, Ben Jonson is surely less of a classicist than his reputation would indicate. There are, I think, only two verse forms in his poetic writings which can be shown to be directly indebted to classical models: his adaptation of the elegaic distich, used in the Prologue to *Volpone* and in "To Sir Robert Wroth," and his adaptations of the classical ode, especially the Pindaric ode. Both these forms were altered by the addition of rhyme, and, of course, they were *accentual* rather than *metrical* verse. All the remaining verse patterns in the nondramatic poetry had already been naturalized in English; Ben's favorite, the heroic couplet, had been made a truly English form by Geoffrey Chaucer himself, and even Edmund Spenser, whose importance in shaping the poet Jonson seems to me to have been grossly underrated, used it in "Mother Hubbard's Tale." Hence, although related to the Latin distich, the heroic couplet, as Jonson used it, cannot be said to be a classical imita-

tion. The couplet with alternating lines of five and four stresses, however, like those in the Prologue to *Volpone*, is almost certainly a return to the ancients instead of a continuation of an English tradition. The latter form, though, is not of any great importance in subsequent English literature, nor did it play much of a part in Ben's own writings. His real contribution to the classical verse in English literature is the ode, represented by the piece to Cary and Morison, one of his most ambitious attempts in poetry.

C. H. Herford, in his excellent and thorough discussion of Jonson's odes, gave three ancient masters who sired the ode in France and England during the Renaissance: Pindar, Anacreon, and Horace. Of these, Horace influenced Jonson most profoundly as a poet; but the English poet's pioneering in the ode was certainly due more to Pindar than to any other writer. Herford pointed out that Pindar's meters were misunderstood not only by English writers like Soothern and Barnes but also by Ronsard and Du Bellay;<sup>9</sup> he also stated that at the time of Jonson's first ode ("To James Earle of Desmond"), the poet could not read French. He evidently based this belief on Drummond's absurd statement "that the best pieces of Ronsard were his Odes. all this was to no purpose, for he neither doeth understand French nor Italianne." Nevertheless, whether Ben could read French or not, there is no reason to doubt Herford's words that "He had clearly gone, as usual, direct to the Greek and Roman masters, subject, as always, to the more authoritative ruling of his own genius."<sup>10</sup> George N. Shuster, though recognizing the possibility that Ben had gone to the Greeks for his metrics in writing the odes, suggested French influence as more likely.<sup>11</sup> Herford and Shuster agree in the main on the Cary and Morison ode, which, again in Herford's words, "is, in metrical structure, fully as Pindaric as *The Progress of Poesy*."<sup>12</sup> In this ode the Pindaric scheme of strophe, antistrophe, and epode is carefully labeled—"The Turne," "The Counter-Turne," and "The Stand"—throughout the entire poem. Except for a single strophe ("It is not growing like a tree"), the ode has been far more highly

<sup>9</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 394-406.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 396.

<sup>11</sup> Shuster, *The English Ode from Milton to Keats*, p. 43.

<sup>12</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 398. See also Shuster, *The English Ode from Milton to Keats*, pp. 43-47.

praised as an example of metrical ingenuity than as a poem. The less strictly Pindaric odes, chiefly the two odes to himself and the "Ode Allegorike," are more unified and in the main more powerful utterances.

Neither the elegiac distich nor the Pindaric ode, however, has played a very large role in English literature. Gray and Collins, and perhaps a few others, took tentative steps along Jonson's path with regard to the ode; but the heroic couplet and the Elizabethan song forms surely owe much of their succeeding vitality to Jonson. And, as we have already seen, neither of these forms can be called "classical" in the archeological sense. It is not by virtue of his use of classical meters or forms that Jonson can be called a classicist.

It is no new idea, however, that Jonson's classicism is a more vital and less tangible matter than an occasional Latin or Greek verse form or an abundance of translations or echoes from ancient works. Herford, though in many respects a follower of Dryden, in tracking Jonson in the snow of the ancients, stated that "critical control and intellectual discipline"<sup>13</sup> were Ben's real contribution to English literature. R. S. Walker, in *Criterion*, was still more emphatic.

His real and infinite debt to the classics is not to be gauged by uncovering the sources of his adaptations. It is to be found in his recognition . . . that true wit does not consist in mere word-play and that decadent Elizabethan verse-craftsmanship was a craftsmanship wrongly applied and of a self-destructive nature.<sup>14</sup>

This statement is a wholesome and necessary corrective to many of the critical judgments passed on Jonson, but standing alone, it is an over-simplification. After all, there is a reasonable amount of poetic merit in the "decadent Elizabethan verse-craftsmanship"; and Walker himself recognized the fact that Ben indulged in it on occasion—true, those indulgences are classified as "failures" in Walker's article. But for the moment, let us table this question; the point under consideration is classicism—classicism as exemplified in "critical control and intellectual discipline." No doubt both these characteristics were present in many of the classics which Jonson read, and if he has indeed critical control and intellectual discipline, he was surely helped

<sup>13</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, I, 108.

<sup>14</sup> Walker, "Ben Jonson's Lyric Poetry," *Criterion*, XIII (1933-34), 445.

by such reading. Can we not agree that he is possessed of these qualities, not in absolute degree, but more fully than any English poet of his day or earlier,—that he is, so to speak, Milton's prophet? But classicism, if it is to be a useful term, must be defined not only by what it contains but also by what it repudiates, and Ben, though he found the classics congenial and after hard labor absorbed and exemplified some of their virtues, did not repudiate the colorful and medieval inheritance. He absorbed and in his robust way exemplified it, too.

Consider first Jonson's use of the "unclassical" device of rhyme, which has come up several times before in contexts which did not allow elaboration. "Classicism" and rhyme are, of course, not incompatible if Racine and Pope are classicists; but there is no true classical precedent for rhyme. In the great mass of Jonson's rhymes, to be sure; just as in the great mass of any other poet's, the reader finds him neither remarkable nor incompetent. His rhyme is reasonably careful and exact, though occasionally what appears now to be approximate rhyme and assonance creep in. Sometimes he uses obsolete or trite linkings: his rather frequent *Poet—know it* and *such—much* do not enhance his reputation as a rhymers; but present-day poets do not always avoid well-worn rhymes. Y rhymes are still pronounced *ee* or *ai*, even though W. S. Gilbert ridiculed the practice in *Iolanthe*; and accents are now displaced with far more violence to normal speech than they were during the English Renaissance. Though sometimes arbitrary and sometimes commonplace, Ben nevertheless showed on occasions complete understanding of the effectiveness of rhyme. In one domain he was a pioneer, and an extremely successful one: his use of humorous feminine rhymes, particularly those in which one of the rhyme-words is a proper noun, struck a new, or at any rate uncommon, note in English poetry. "The Famous Voyage" is unusually rich in examples of the practice: *or which—Norwich*; *Bristo'—list ho*; *Pollux—all lucks*; *ab excelsis—Paracelsus*; *Minos—high nose*. These are surely prophetic of Butler's rhymes in "Hudibras," Byron's in "Don Juan," Browning's in "The Pied Piper," and Gilbert's in general. These rhymes are indicative of a trait emphasized in L. C. Knights's *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson*: a gusty love of spontaneous word-slinging. It is only fair to show the

praised as an example of metrical ingenuity than as a poem. The less strictly Pindaric odes, chiefly the two odes to himself and the "Ode Allegorike," are more unified and in the main more powerful utterances.

Neither the elegiac distich nor the Pindaric ode, however, has played a very large role in English literature. Gray and Collins, and perhaps a few others, took tentative steps along Jonson's path with regard to the ode; but the heroic couplet and the Elizabethan song forms surely owe much of their succeeding vitality to Jonson. And, as we have already seen, neither of these forms can be called "classical" in the archeological sense. It is not by virtue of his use of classical meters or forms that Jonson can be called a classicist.

It is no new idea, however, that Jonson's classicism is a more vital and less tangible matter than an occasional Latin or Greek verse form or an abundance of translations or echoes from ancient works. Herford, though in many respects a follower of Dryden, in tracking Jonson in the snow of the ancients, stated that "critical control and intellectual discipline"<sup>13</sup> were Ben's real contribution to English literature. R. S. Walker, in *Criterion*, was still more emphatic.

His real and infinite debt to the classics is not to be gauged by uncovering the sources of his adaptations. It is to be found in his recognition . . . that true wit does not consist in mere word-play and that decadent Elizabethan verse-craftsmanship was a craftsmanship wrongly applied and of a self-destructive nature.<sup>14</sup>

This statement is a wholesome and necessary corrective to many of the critical judgments passed on Jonson, but standing alone, it is an over-simplification. After all, there is a reasonable amount of poetic merit in the "decadent Elizabethan verse-craftsmanship"; and Walker himself recognized the fact that Ben indulged in it on occasion—true, those indulgences are classified as "failures" in Walker's article. But for the moment, let us table this question; the point under consideration is classicism—classicism as exemplified in "critical control and intellectual discipline." No doubt both these characteristics were present in many of the classics which Jonson read, and if he has indeed critical control and intellectual discipline, he was surely helped

<sup>13</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, I, 108.

<sup>14</sup> Walker, "Ben Jonson's Lyric Poetry," *Criterion*, XIII (1933-34), 445.

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other side of the picture. Swinburne thought many of Jonson's rhymes hopeless and absurd, but the worst examples given are from literal translations: the Virgilian passage from *Poetaster*, Martial's Epigram VIII. lxxvii, and some lines from *The Art of Poetry*. The last passage is called an "indescribable horror."

A scarlet piece or two stitch'd in; when or  
Diana's grove or altar, *with the bor-*  
*D'ring* circles of swift waters, &c, &c.<sup>15</sup>

A partial explanation of this unfortunate rhyme is the burden of literal translation; but there is also justification in the classics for such word-splitting at the end of a line, as Kathryn A. McEuen pointed out, even though classical versification furnished no precedent for rhyming a divided word.<sup>16</sup> Of course, a generation conditioned by reading E. E. Cummings would find nothing disturbing in a split word.

A casual reading of all the poems might well leave the impression that Jonson was a man of few metrical forms. The great mass of the poetry is written in heroic couplets. His songs, which comprise the next largest body of poetry, are written in various meters, as are his hymns. But in spite of his preference for these forms of non-dramatic verse, he made numerous excursions into other meters. He tried his hand at Italian sonnets, English sonnets,<sup>17</sup> *terza rima*,<sup>18</sup> rhyme royal (which perhaps because of his lack of understanding of the final "e" in Middle English is four-stress instead of five-stress),<sup>19</sup> closed quatrains, Skeltonic leashes, and a number of others. In the plays and masques he experimented with still other verse forms, including the popular long lines of tumbling verse embedded in the expected "blanks." This metrical variety is the becoming artistic garment of the various emotional and intellectual attitudes which have been amply defined in the earlier chapters of this work.

<sup>15</sup> Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 114.

<sup>16</sup> McEuen, *Classical Influence on the Tribe of Ben*, pp. 166, 277; see also Jonson, *Sejanus*, ed. by W. D. Briggs, p. 234.

<sup>17</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, II, 392-93. <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 382.

<sup>19</sup> The poem "On the King's Birth-day," beginning, "Rowse up thy selfe my gentle Muse," is referred to here; there is another example of the pattern at the beginning of "A New-Yeares-Gift sung to King Charles," but strictly speaking, one cannot call it rhyme royal, since the seven-line pattern immediately merges with the rest of the poem, which is in different meters.



Next, let us consider his attitude toward classical mythology. Is that attitude classical? Ranging from high seriousness to gross burlesque, he made plentiful use of it; but he is at no pains to free himself from the temper and literary methods of the Middle Ages. Angels may sing in the same poem in which Orpheus strikes his lyre; Hercules, King Arthur, and Old Bankes, the juggler, may walk through the same lines; rough Pan may become a "good shepherd." Statius and St. Thomas Aquinas may meet in the same poem, though, of course, their association does not seem strange to a reader of Dante. Moreover, when the muses and angels are invoked in the same work, the Christian inspiration quickly triumphs over the pagan. The shorter hymns, we have seen, are "imitations" of medieval lyrics—accurate to the last detail. In them the Christian religion is uncontaminated by any pagan influences. And even many of Jonson's satires which stem from the works of Horace, Juvenal, and Martial are pervaded by Christian sermonizing. Less strange than the mingling of mythology and religion is the mingling of courtly love and religion. For this imaginative flight he clearly borrowed the "purple wings" of the Elizabethans, which R. S. Walker found too ornate. And finally, by an easy transition from the literature of love to the masques in which love was always the principal theme, we may watch the two great collaborators guide their allegorical and mythological figures through painted scenes, false lights, and mechanical devices into regions where plastic arts and music were of vital importance in shaping the poet's literary character.

Once more the label—this time that of "classicist"—does not fit Jonson. He knew the classics and loved them; they left their mark upon him and on his work, but as Milton is "Miltonic," Ben is and remains "Jonsonian." But let him speak:

I know Nothing can conduce more to letters, then to examine the writings of the Ancients, and not to rest in their sole Authority, or take all upon trust from them. . . . For to all the observations of the Ancients, wee have our owne experience: which, if wee will use, and apply, wee have better meanes to pronounce. It is true they open'd the gates, and made the way that went before us; but as Guides, not Commanders. . . . Truth lyes open to all; it is no mans severall.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Jonson, *Discoveries*.

Jonson's bulk is not physical only, but that of a person whom out of no idle curiosity we wish to know better. It is a personality that attracts and repels. He has attackers and defenders; to play the impartial critic is no easy task. The prefaces to the plays, in which he frankly addresses his readers, argues with them, or lectures them, and the numerous poems in which he speaks in his proper person create an ever-growing sense of personal contact between reader and writer, which renders almost impossible unprejudiced judgment of the poems themselves. I have tried sincerely, if not always successfully, to speak as objectively as a man can about a subject on which he feels strongly, to make assertions backed chiefly by references to Ben's own text, and to avoid as far as possible basing any argument on the gossip and chit-chat of witty or malicious contemporaries of the poet—without denying that there may be some truth and some justice even in their more violent attacks. If my analysis of Jonson's poetry has not failed completely, it has indicated—I hope proved—that the poet is not easily reduced to general terms and strict classifications without serious loss of perspective; that, though beyond doubt Ben drew on his personal emotions and personal enmities for much of his inspiration, they are of relatively little importance in themselves. Many men have been angry; many have felt grief, many have known friendship; but only poets (*makers* in any of the arts) have been able to create lasting works of art from those emotions. The great importance of Jonson as poet, aside from the intangible *deus in nobis* which is beyond all analysis, is that he wove and combined varied traditions, giving them new life, and was able to transmute the cruder aspects of the life of his own day into poetry—to make poetry out of dust, sweat, rags, spiderwebs, and the toothless gums of an ancient crone. Mere analysis of traditions is not sufficient to explain his poetry, any more than interpretation of it as versified autobiography is sufficient; both play important parts, but even together they cannot completely account for him as man or poet.

Time after time Ben insisted on the mission of the poet "to profit, and delight." When he speaks of Shakespeare as "shaking a lance in the eyes of ignorance," he is expressing more than a mere play on words; he is enunciating a fundamental principle: the poet is the natural foe of ignorance, the only "disease of the Soule." In his con-

stant warfare against ignorance, besides his close-packed dramas, he poured out sharp satiric verse, romantic fantasy and folk poetry in masques and independent poems, brilliant songs, strong religious lyrics, hard, gem-like epigrams and epitaphs, rollicking burlesques, and even an occasional nature poem. Moreover, in a few pieces he raised the commendatory poem to the level of literature. In each of these types Jonson has been equaled—probably most readers would say emphatically *surpassed*—by one or more English poets. His greatness rests, however, on his total accomplishment. Not all the poetic compositions (plays, masques, and poems) succeed in giving a rounded picture of the man. To paint such a portrait the critic must draw upon essays, letters, prefaces, dedications, indeed, the whole body of his literary work. My purpose has been more modest: to shed light on a somewhat neglected, but, to Ben himself, an extremely important part of his works.

At the outset of this book an unanswerable question was asked: "Why was Ben Jonson a poet?" Perhaps—only perhaps—it was because from someone, probably his master Camden, the poor boy of London ("built," said Herford, "of somewhat common materials, and on no very exalted lines")<sup>21</sup> caught a vision of the glories of learning and imbibed an abhorrence of ignorance. His passionately held respect for truth, a keen sense of fact, and a shaping imagination which stamped even chaos with form combined to drive him into the other world of poetry. There he found the truth, the order, the beauty, and the justice which he could not find in his London. In poets dead and living he met peers more admirable and more congenial than he found either among the proudest nobles of England or the "many-headed Bench." Associated with the poets, he must have felt himself part of the stream of creation which flows through time from generation to generation. For like all true poets he is a summary of what has gone before and a prophecy of what is to follow. In him meet the classics, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, and (what has been far less generally realized) the principal trends of English Literature of the three centuries following his death. Without being willing to follow Falkland in his statement that Jonson alone would be a fair exchange for all other writers, that he alone

<sup>21</sup> Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. by Herford and Simpson, I, 120.

would be enough to make the literary *world*,<sup>22</sup> we may safely say that he is a literary *microcosm* and that understanding him sheds light on poets who seem on the surface to have little in common with him. He is, in other words, a Master Poet.

<sup>22</sup> In "An Eclogue on the Death of Ben Jonson," the first piece in *Jonsonus Virbius*.

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